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THE

CLERGY AND THE PULPIT

IN THEIR

RELATIONS TO THE PEOPLE.

THE

CLERGY AND THE PULPIT

IN THEIR

RELATIONS TO THE PEOPLE.

BY

M. L'ABBÉ ISIDORE MULLOIS,

CHAPLAIN TO THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON III., AND MISSIONARY APOSTOLIC.

TRANSLATED BY

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LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.
1867.

110. g. 135.

CONTENTS.

Page

INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR ix

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR xxix

CHAPTER I.

TO ADDRESS MEN WELL, THEY MUST BE LOVED MUCH.

The Gospel enjoins universal Benevolence—The Men of the present Age have a special Claim to our Love—The Success of Preaching depends upon our loving them — Wherein true Apostolical Eloquence consists 1

CHAPTER II.

THE PEOPLE.

The actual State of the People—Their good and bad Qualities—The People in large Cities—The People in small Towns—The People in rural Districts—How to benefit these Three Classes of the People—One powerful Means is to act upon the People through the upper Classes, and upon the latter through the former 25

CHAPTER III.

THE ORDER OF A SERMON.

The Exordium—Divisions—Proofs—Are there many Unbelievers in France?—Manner of refuting Objections 100

CHAPTER IV.

THE SERMON SHOULD BE POPULAR.

Page

What constitutes true Popularity?—Popularity in Words, in Thought, in Sentiment—One of the most popular Sentiments in France is Patriotism—Means to utilize that Sentiment—The Relationship between Popularity and Genius—Demosthenes—Saint John Chrysostom—Daniel O'Connell 117

CHAPTER V.

THE SERMON SHOULD BE PLAIN.

An obscure Sermon is neither Christian nor French—Abuse of philosophical Terms—Philosophical Speculations not popular amongst us—The French mind is clear and logical—Plainness of Speech—Plainness of Thought—Starting from the Known to the Unknown—Metaphors—Similes—Parables—Facts—Père Lejeune—M. l'Abbé Leudreuil 140

CHAPTER VI.

THE SERMON SHOULD BE SHORT.

The Discourses of the Fathers were short—The French Mind is quick to apprehend—Sermons are generally too long—Sermons of Ten, Seven, and of Five Minutes 162

CHAPTER VII.

TACT AND KINDLINESS.

We should assume that our Hearers are what we wish them to be—Reproaches to be avoided—How to address Unbelievers—Special Precautions to be taken in small Towns and Rural Districts—How to treat Men during times of public Commotion—Forbearance due to the Church for being obliged to receive Money from the Faithful..... 175

CHAPTER VIII.

INTEREST, EMOTION, AND ANIMATION.

Page

We should endeavour to excite Interest by Thoughts, by Sallies or Epigrams, by Studies of Men and Manners—The Truth should be animated—The Père Ravignan—The Père Lacordaire—The Heart is too often absent 199

CHAPTER IX.

THE POWER AND ACCENT OF CONVICTION.

The Divine Word has always been the first Power in the World—The Gospel still the first of Books—There can be no Christian Eloquence without the Accent of personal Conviction 219

CHAPTER X.

ACTION.

Action should be: first, true and natural; secondly, concentrated; thirdly, edifying—It should be cultivated—How cultivated by the Society of Jesus—Suggestions 230

CHAPTER XI.

STUDY.

Study a Duty—The State of the World calls for Knowledge on the part of the Clergy—Knowledge has always been one of the Glories of Religion—All the eminent Men in the Church were Men of Study—Reasons adduced for not studying, answered: Want of Leisure, natural Aptitude, the Plea of having already studied sufficiently; that one is fully equal to the Requirements of the People committed to his Charge 250

CHAPTER XII.

ZEAL.

Page

The Excellency of Zeal—Love for the Body should be coupled with Love for the Soul—The Zeal of the Wicked—How Zeal should be exercised—Associations :—of Apprentices ;—of Operatives ; —Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul ;—of Domestics ;—of Clerks ;—of the Young—Circulation of good Books—Happy Results of the same—The Advantages and Difficulties of Opposition—Great Occasions 261

INTRODUCTION

BY THE TRANSLATOR.

THIS volume is the first of a series by the same learned and pious author, published under the title of *Cours d'Éloquence Sacrée Populaire, ou, Essai sur la Manière de parler au Peuple.* It comprises the whole of what may be termed the didactic portion of the work; the remaining four volumes, which appeared subsequently and at different intervals, consisting of short essays on various religious subjects, dissertations on the early Fathers of the Church, sketches of contemporaneous authors and preachers, and a copious selection of extracts from his own and other sermons; all designed to illustrate more fully the rules, or, as the Abbé modestly calls them, "the series of ideas," set forth in the present volume for the guidance of the clergy in their pastoral ministrations, especially in the pulpit.

The original work has attained a deservedly high reputation in France, and several large editions have been successively called for. No less than twenty thousand copies are said to be in the hands of as many ecclesiastics. This is a gratifying proof that the French clergy are beginning to be alive to the importance of some radical change in the style of their public teaching and preaching, if they would regain the influence which they once possessed over the masses, and use it in a way calculated to promote the best interests of their fellow-countrymen.

One of the author's principal objects is to direct the attention of his brethren in the ministry to the people, or lower orders; whose apathy for religion, and consequent low state of morality, he attributes to the estrangement which took place between the clergy and the nation generally at the period of the great Revolution. Without stopping to apportion the share of blame to either party, he nevertheless broadly intimates that the former failed in their duty, by not standing up boldly in the breach to arrest that torrent of wild fanaticism and irreligion which then swept over the country,

and for several years well nigh suppressed Christianity in France altogether. He is glad to recognize, however, that the mutual bitterness which sprang out of that dire catastrophe is gradually disappearing, and that the French clergy are being roused to a sense of their grave responsibilities as the spiritual fathers of the people; whose abject condition calls for the exercise of the utmost tenderness and solicitude on their part. "Our age is a great prodigal son: let us help it to repent and to return to the paternal home."

The suggestions made in this treatise for promoting so desirable a reformation among the lower classes, deserve the serious attention of all Christian Churches, and are, in the main, as timely in the case of the English as in that of the French clergy. The mission of both is identical, and the present relative position of the clergy and the masses in the two countries is in several respects analogous. We, too, are being stirred from that supineness which characterized the national clergy half a century ago, and find ourselves in the midst of a teeming lower class population, who, if not affected with French scepticism, are largely alienated from religion

through ignorance and indifferentism, the result of past neglect on the part of those whose duty it was to keep them instructed in the principles of the Gospel.

There is much lost way to be regained on this score, and the nature of the work to be accomplished—that of reclaiming the hearts of men from a degrading materialism to practical godliness—demands the highest qualifications and the exercise of the noblest faculties. In addition to the ordinary clerical education, it requires that the minister of the Gospel should be penetrated with a sincere love for mankind in its most fallen condition—"one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." It requires that he should be deeply read in the science of the heart; capable of appreciating the force of all the springs which set in motion the multiform phases of human action, of diverting them from those channels where they only serve to fertilize a soil already rank with vice and misery, and of leading them to the pastures of virtue and happiness. And, further, apart from the Divine influence which we believe to accompany the ordinances of the Christian Church, it requires

a wise economy in dispensing those ordinances, so as to ensure the great ends for which they were designed—the present and future redemption of mankind.

In Him who was pre-eminently the *Son of Man* and the *Friend of Sinners*, we have the brightest pattern of this comprehensive benevolence; and in the sayings and doings of His immediate Disciples—the despised fishermen of Galilee—we find exemplified that wisdom of the serpent, joined with the harmlessness of the dove, which made them successful "fishers of men," and enabled them to set up His kingdom of righteousness in the world.

Humbly to follow in the footsteps of their Divine Master, and to preach the Gospel with the same fervent love and self-denying zeal, which taught the first Evangelists to become all things to all men, that they might by all means save some, is the duty of their successors in the Christian ministry everywhere, as it should be their main reliance for winning men over to the truth; for is not the Gospel the power of God unto salvation? and, hath it not pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe?

Such, if I have read them aright, are the author's views of the requirements and responsibilities of those whose vocation it is to preach the everlasting Gospel. How far, in his judgment, that standard is attained by the French clergy at the present day, may be inferred from the following extracts embodied in the Preface to the Second Volume; where he also takes occasion to give an instructive definition of the term "Popular," as applied to Sacred or Pulpit eloquence:—

"True popular preaching is not that which is addressed exclusively to the lower orders; but that which is addressed to all, and is understood by all. Such is the import of the word *popular*. When a man is said to be popular, it implies that he meets with sympathy on all sides; from among the upper, the lower, and the middle classes of society. When we say, charity is popular, we mean that it finds an echo in the breasts of all. The Gospel is essentially popular; hence Christian eloquence also should be popular at all times and in all places; as well in large cities as in small towns and country districts: unless an exceptional audience is addressed, and there is only one such

in France, namely, that of Notre-Dame at Paris.

"This is what a sermon ought to be:—A learned academician listening to it on one side, and a poor illiterate woman on the other, both should derive therefrom something to enlighten their minds and improve their hearts.

"We, the clergy, are debtors to all. How can we denounce injustice from the pulpit if we exhibit an example of it in our own persons? This is a matter involving a sacred trust, which has not met with adequate consideration; for how can we preach charity when we deprive the poor of that which is their due—the bread of knowledge? We should deem it an atrocity to retain the alms given to us for the needy; and does not our faith tell us that it would be a still greater crime to withhold from them the saving truths of the Gospel? . . . It is one of the great glories, one of the great powers of the ordinance of preaching, that the word preached should embrace all without any exception; and we are sadly to blame for having renounced that vantage-ground. Hence it is that our sermons nowadays are dry, meagre, artificial, and inefficacious, and no longer exhibit that

fulness and life, that broad effusion of thought, those throbbings of the heart and thrilling accents of the soul, which bespeak a double origin; indicating that what we utter is at once the voice of God and the voice of the people.

"I am going to speak without any reserve. Painful as the subject may be, it is desirable that the clergy should be made thoroughly aware of it. Go where you will in France, you meet with numbers of excellent and eminently intelligent men who say:—'I really cannot account for it; but I can no longer bear listening to sermons, for they weary me dreadfully. The phraseology generally used is humdrum and threadbare, and the matter consists of an incoherent mixture of rhetoric and philosophy, art and mysticism, of which nobody understands anything. Then, again, their monotonous uniformity throughout is enough to send even those into a doze who have lost the habit of sleeping. I sincerely believe that I should do better by abstaining; but for the sake of example, I resign myself to enduring them.' And, be it remembered, that these are the remarks, not of the ill-disposed, but of devoutly religious men; proving the necessity of some

large reform, since it would he idle to suppose that such concurrent testimony from all parts of France is unfounded. The same men, be it remarked, after listening to a genial, diversified, popular, and sterling discourse, will readily exclaim :—'That's the thing that I want! That's what does me good! That's what I like!'

"We must revert, therefore, to the genuine style of evangelical preaching, which is that of a father addressing his numerous family, and who wishes to be understood by all his children, from the eldest to the youngest.

"But we must not be deluded into thinking that such popular preaching is easy: on the contrary, it is very difficult of attainment; for it involves no less a task than that of speaking a language which shall be level to the comprehension of the masses, and at the same time adapted to educated minds. Would you master that task? Study much, study everything: theology, literature, the Holy Scriptures, more especially the Gospel; acquire a deep insight into the human heart; and, withal, cultivate your own mind till it can digest all knowledge. Then write and speak like one who has really drawn

what he utters out of the good treasures of the heart, and in such a way that all who hear you may be ready to say :—' Really, what he states is very simple ; it is sound sense ; it is right. It is just what I would have said myself under similar circumstances.' Let us recall what has already been remarked elsewhere—that a little study withdraws us from the natural, whereas much study leads us to it. Reveal your heart, your soul ; for, after all, the soul of man, that masterpiece of God's hand, will always carry more weight than all the embellishments of philosophy or rhetoric."

Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur. It will not be disputed that the complaint thus broadly stated as prevailing in France on the score of sermons, is loudly re-echoed on this side of the Channel. Go where you will throughout the United Kingdom, the same remarks on the tedium and want of vitality in our pulpit ministrations meet you on all sides. And this from a people who are as constitutionally reverent as the French nation —I mean no disparagement—may be said to be the reverse. It is high time, however, that the clergy should give heed to this growing

distaste for dull, perfunctory, and lengthy discourses; otherwise, the sentiment may spread among those who still retain a passion for sermons, or who continue to frequent them barely from a sense of duty, or for example's sake, and be succeeded by a general apathy towards religion, even on the part of the middle and upper classes of society. It is high time, too, that something should be done to bring the neglected lower classes within the influence of public religious instruction. One of the proofs which our blessed Lord gave to John the Baptist of His Messiahship was this,—that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Could we venture to appeal to the same test to establish our claim—I say not to be the apostles of the Saviour in His mission of love and mercy, but—even to Christianity? It is true that most of our churches are crowded Sunday after Sunday; but the crowds are composed of the rich, the well-to-do, the well-dressed: and where are the poor, who constitute about eighty per cent. of the entire population? The chill and narrow aisles and out-of-the-way corners, furnished with straight-backed benches, in invidious contrast with the

comfortable cushioned pews and seats in the generality of our places of worship, are, as might be expected, scantily occupied by those for whom they are niggardly provided, and the poor are—where? "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." If this injunction means any thing, it imposes a solemn duty on Christian ministers to seek after those who are perishing for lack of knowledge in our densely populated poorer districts, and to use the most strenuous efforts to bring them within the sound of the Gospel. *The Bishop of London's Fund* for meeting the spiritual wants of the metropolis and its suburbs, is a noble attempt in the right direction, and has already accomplished much good. Still, one cannot fail to recognize great inconsistency, and, withal, great injustice towards our own destitute fellow-countrymen, in the measure of support which that national enterprise has met with, as compared with what is done throughout the United Kingdom on behalf of foreign missions. The gross sum received and promised to the fund referred to, since its commencement in 1863, amounts to 273,000*l.*; whereas the aggregate subscriptions to three or four of our principal

missionary societies—raised chiefly through the instrumentality of the clergy of different denominations—average as much annually. And yet if, as Saint Paul says, we are to do good unto all men, but especially unto them who are of the household of faith, the poor of London and of our large manufacturing towns have a prior claim to our Christian sympathy. Moreover, if an estimate were made of the results of our missionary enterprise abroad, as compared with expenditure, it would probably show that more money is spent in converting one hundred heathens, than would suffice to supply twenty times as many of our own spiritually destitute fellow-countrymen with all the means of grace. And further, judging from the published narratives of many of our missionaries, the most assiduous efforts are brought to bear upon individuals in their field of labour. No means are left untried to proselyte one Jew, one Indian Pariah, one Maori, one African Zulu or Ashantee, whose conversion to Christianity is hailed as a glorious triumph. I do not say that such exertions ought not to be made—far from it; but I do say, adopting the language of Abbé Mullois :—"Are not our pagans in England

worth as much as the pagans of Oceania? Are not our English little ones as deserving of compassion as Chinese children? True, their parents do not expose them on the highways; but they abandon them to shame, to vice, to the education of the streets. . . . It is right that we should commiserate the heathen—that devotion should be manifested on their behalf; but let us have compassion on our own children also—on our brothers in England—that they be not suffered to perish before our eyes."

Another duty on the part of the clergy, after getting the people to frequent the house of God, is to instruct them in the Gospel when they are there; to dispense its elevating and saving truths in language suited to their capacity, and in a manner which shall attract, interest, and benefit them. 'I ask, in all soberness, if this is the case in a tithe of the sermons preached in our churches?

Some radical and wide-spread reforms are urgently called for in these respects, before any hope can reasonably be entertained of bringing the masses under the elevating influence of religion. The gauds and tinsel of ultra-ritualism will prove a sorry substitute to change men's

hearts, however much such outward pomp may amuse and gratify certain susceptibilities of our nature. Neither is true religion likely to be promoted by more elaborate ecclesiastical machinery and routine. The Abbé Mullois deplores that an increasing tendency to what he calls "administration" is curtailing the usefulness of the sacred ministry in France. Let the clergy of England, and the laity also, beware of the same dangers, before it is too late. "It is clear from history and everyday observation," says a thoughtful writer in the *Times* of the 11th of October last, "that what is wanted to touch the hearts of the multitude is the living spectacle of a warm and genuine piety. One such character has before now bent the hearts of even greater multitudes than are congregated in our large town parishes, and this influence either creates its own machinery or dispenses with it. Here, too, it is from study and from solitude that the clergy must derive their inspiration, not from church congresses and ingenious schemes of parochial administration. The fact is, all such efforts begin at the wrong end. They start from the outside instead of from the inside. It is to theology and personal religion,

not to parochial machinery and ecclesiastical constitutions, that the attention of religious reformers needs to be directed."

The coincidence between these views and those expressed in the extracts from the Preface above quoted is remarkable. The evils complained of, and the reforms suggested, for the more efficient ministrations of the clergy, are set forth in this volume with a candour and dignity, a generous sympathy and earnest piety, which bespeak a man well qualified for the important task he has undertaken. His criticisms and admonitions are as applicable to ourselves as they were to those for whom they were primarily designed; and if the English clergy profit by them, the nation at large will owe a deep debt of gratitude to the eminent author.

A vein of what we should call national vanity runs through several portions of these essays; buf it must be borne in mind that the author is a Frenchman, and writes for Frenchmen—a sufficient apology for any exaggerated patriotism on his part. It will also be found that his descriptions of the bias and temper of the lower orders in France are not always applicable to the corresponding classes in

England. This is nothing more than might have been expected; as, in some respects, the characteristics of the two peoples are widely different. It would have been difficult to eliminate these peculiarities without recasting the entire volume; but such alteration was not within the province of a translator: and, besides, it was not needed in order to render the work useful among ourselves. The points mainly insisted on are these:—that the moral and spiritual interests of the French lower classes have been grievously neglected; that, in consequence, their morality and religion are at a very low ebb; that, nevertheless, they are not wholly depraved, and retain some excellent traits which should be assiduously cultivated; that their good and bad qualities should be thoroughly studied by those whose duty it is to minister to them in sacred things; that their hearts are open to earnest affectionate sympathy; and that in order to be crowned with success, a spirit of genuine and self-devoted charity should accompany and direct every means used to reclaim and raise them. In these important features, which are drawn by a masterly hand, under the inspiration of a heart overflowing

with benevolence, we may recognize a correct delineation of our lower class population, together with much sound counsel how to promote their amelioration and welfare.

My proposal to prepare an English version of the work was cordially welcomed by the author; the only imposed condition being that its catholic spirit should be preserved. If this remark had reference to any doctrines peculiar to the Church of which the Abbé Mullois is a distinguished divine, it scarcely amounted to a restriction. Read, if you prefer it, "presbyter" or "minister" for "priest," and overlook a few casual allusions to tenets and practices disallowed by reformed communities, and the spirit of this volume throughout will be found to be catholic in its widest and best sense: too catholic it may be, for some both within and without the pale of the Latin as well as the Anglican and other national churches.

A word about the translation. It has been my endeavour not only honestly to keep faith with the author, but also to give as exact a rendering of the original as possible. The task has been a difficult one, owing to the designed popularity of the author's style—a style so terse

and idiomatic as to defy any attempt to convey the same ideas with equal force in a different language. I have, however, done my best, and am as fully aware of the imperfections of the effort as the keenest critic could make me. I therefore strongly advise those who are well versed in French to read the Abbé's admirable essay in the original.

GEORGE PERCY BADGER.

London, 7, *Dawson Place, Bayswater*,
12*th December*, 1866.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

It is surprising that whereas, during the last three centuries, many books have been published on the mode of preaching to the higher classes, scarcely anything has been written on the same subject with reference to the people, or lower orders. It seems to have been thought that the latter ought to be satisfied with the crumbs which might fall from the table provided for the educated portion of society.

Nevertheless, nothing could be more opposed to the spirit of the Gospel; which is specially addressed to the poor and humble—"He hath anointed Me to preach to the poor." The Fathers of the early Church did not consider it beneath their genius to write treatises on the manner of communicating religious instruction to the people. The people form nearly the whole of the population. In France, they

number twenty-three out of a total of twenty-five millions; yet, strange to say, they are quite overlooked. The educated two millions appear to have assumed that they constitute France, and that France has so willed it. But if a few men were to arise capable of laying hold of the instincts of the multitude, were it only of one of the emotions which stir them, they would soon undeceive those who fancy that the people are under their guidance. We know something by experience on that score.

There is a prevailing conviction among the well-disposed that nothing but religion can save us; that France must either once more become Christian or perish. But in order that religion may exercise a beneficial influence over the masses, it must be brought into contact with them; and that can only be done by the preaching of the Word, agreeably with the inspired declaration:—"Faith cometh by hearing."

It is much more difficult than is imagined to preach to the common people, because they are so little conversant with spiritual things, and so much absorbed in what is material. It is more difficult to address them than the wealthier classes; for, in addressing the latter, one has

only to fall in with the current of their ideas; whereas in preaching to the former, we have to bring high and sublime thoughts within the grasp of feeble intelligences. Besides, there exists among the masses a certain amount of knowledge more or less superficial, and none is more difficult to direct than a half-taught man.

The foregoing considerations have led us to indite this little treatise; wherein our object has been not to lay down any specific rules, but simply to set forth the teachings of experience. What we most need nowadays is a popular religious literature to meet the temper and wants of the people. Such a literature does not exist. It should be based entirely on the national character and on the precepts of the Gospel. Invested with those two qualities, it would become an irresistible agency for good, and would act as powerfully on the educated few as on the unlettered many. It might inaugurate the regeneration of our literature by restoring to it vitality, naturalness, and dignity. The time has come for taking up the cause of the people in earnest. The community generally is impressed with that conviction, and manifests a praiseworthy desire to encourage every effort for

ameliorating their moral condition. Upwards of one hundred thousand volumes specially designed for them are sold every year. Worldly-minded men, too, are anxious to foster the movement; finding that those who show a disposition to benefit the masses are sure to meet with countenance, sympathy, and even veneration. Moreover, we are at present in the enjoyment of profound calm. Heretofore, the apology for delay was :—" Let us wait to see the upshot of passing events; for who knows what may become of us; who knows but that we may be driven from our own homes?" The evil-disposed have had their day; let us see what honest folk may and can do.

Let us mutually co-operate, piously and charitably, to become once more a united people and country—a France with one heart and one soul. 'Twill be the beginning of blessedness.

THE

CLERGY AND THE PULPIT

IN

THEIR RELATIONS TO THE PEOPLE.

CHAPTER I.

TO ADDRESS MEN WELL, THEY MUST BE LOVED MUCH.

The Gospel enjoins universal Benevolence—The Men of the present Age have a special Claim to our Love—The Success of Preaching depends upon our loving them—Wherein true Apostolical Eloquence consists.

MANY rules of eloquence have been set forth, but, strange to say, the first and most essential of all has been overlooked, namely, Charity. . . . To address men well, they must be loved much. Whatever they may be, be they ever so guilty, or indifferent, or ungrateful, or however deeply sunk in crime, before all and above all, they must be loved. Love is the sap of the Gospel, the secret of lively and effectual preaching, the magic power of eloquence. . . . The end of preaching is to reclaim the hearts of men to God, and nothing but love can find out the myste-

rious avenues which lead to the heart. We are always eloquent when we wish to save one whom we love; we are always listened to when we are loved. But when a hearer is not moved by love, instead of listening to the truth, he ransacks his mind for something wherewith to repel it: and in so doing human depravity is seldom at fault.

If, then, you do not feel a fervent love and profound pity for humanity—if in beholding its miseries and errors you do not experience the throbbings, the holy thrillings of Charity—be assured that the gift of Christian eloquence has been denied you. You will not win souls, neither will you ever gain influence over them, and you will never acquire that most excellent of earthly sovereignties—sovereignty over the hearts of men.

I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that the tradition of this great evangelical charity has declined among us. I hasten to add, however, that this is the fault of the age, of its injustices and sarcasms. It has dealt so hardly with Christianity, and has been so ungrateful towards it, that our souls have become embittered, and our words have been sometimes cold and dry: like the mere words of a man and nothing more. But that bitterness is passing away.

Religion in France, at the present day, is in the condition of a mother who meets with indifference and abuse from her son. The first outburst of her heart is one of pain and repugnance; but soon the

better part of her nature gains the ascendancy, and she says within herself: "After all, it is true that he is wicked; it is also true that he fills me with grief, and is killing me with anguish; nevertheless, he is still my child, and I am still his mother. . . . I cannot help loving him, so great is his power over me. Let them say what they will, I still love him. . . . Would to God that he had a desire to return! Would that he might change! How readily would I pardon everything and forget all! . . . How, then, can I enjoy a moment's happiness whilst knowing that he is wicked or wretched?" . . . This is what Religion and those who represent it have felt. We have been wounded; we have been made to suffer cruelly. Yes, men have been unjust and ungrateful; but these same are our brethren still, still our children. And can we be happy while we see them wicked and miserable? Have they not already suffered enough? . . . . The question is not to ascertain what they are worth, but to save them such as they are. Our age is a great prodigal son; let us help it to return to the paternal home. Now is the time to recall the admirable words of Fenelon:—"O ye pastors, put away from you all narrowness of heart. Enlarge, enlarge your compassion. You know nothing if you know merely how to command, to reprove, to correct, to expound the letter of the law. Be fathers, . . . yet that is not enough; be as mothers."

This large love for men, alike for the good and the

evil, is the pervading spirit of the Gospel. It is the true spirit of Christianity. Its power was felt by our fathers in the sacred ministry, and it governed their lives.

Look at Saint Paul, that great missionary of the Catholic Church. A stream of love flows from his apostolic soul. He did not suffer himself to be disconcerted by the failings, the vices, or the crimes of men. His heart uplifts him above such considerations, and he overcomes human prejudices and errors by the power of his charity. Let us hear him:—"O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. . . . Be ye also enlarged. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you. I seek not yours, but you. . . . and I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." And, again:—"Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and, indeed, bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth." *

"I say the truth in Christ that I lie not," saith he to the Romans; "I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren." † And

* 2 Cor. vi. 11–13. 1 Cor. iv. 15. 2 Cor. xii. 14, 15; xi. 1, 2, 11.
† Rom. ix. 2, 3.

addressing the Galatians, he says :—"Brethren, be as I am; for I am as ye are. Ye know how . . . through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel to you at the first. And my temptation, which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected. . . . Where is, then, the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? . . . My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."* . . . And, again, writing to the Philippians :—"It is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart. . . . For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. . . . Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all."†

Alas! in this our day we see around us the same men, the same frailties, the same passions. Let us aim at possessing the same apostolical heart.

In like manner Saint Chrysostom. . . . what love, what charity, what devotedness dwelt in the heart of that Christian orator! And as regards the people with whom he had to deal; what laxity, what vices, what baseness had he not to contend against! Nevertheless, his heart is inflamed with charity, his yearnings are kindled. Exclamations of pain, the

* Gal. iv. 12-16, 19. † Philip. i. 7, 8; ii. 17.

plaintive accents of pity escape from him; and even when he grows angry, he entreats, he sues for pardon.

"I beseech you," said he to the faithful, "to receive me with affection when I come here; for I have the purest love for you. I feel that I love you with the tenderness of a father. If occasionally I reprove you rather sharply, it arises from the earnest desire which I have for your salvation. . . . If you reject my words, I shall not shake off the dust of my feet against you. Not that herein I would disobey the Saviour, but because the love which He has given me for you prevents my doing so. . . . But, and if you refuse to love us, at least love yourselves by renouncing that sad listlessness which possesses you. It will suffice for our consolation that we see you becoming better, and progressing in the ways of God. Hereby, also, will my affection appear still greater, that while having so much to youward, you shall have so little towards me. . . . We give you what we have received, and, in giving it, ask nothing but your love in return. If we are unworthy of it, love us notwithstanding, and perchance your charity may render us deserving."

"You love me and I love you," said he, addressing the believers, "and I would willingly give you my life, and not merely that small service which I render by preaching the Gospel unto you."

In consequence of sickness he had been obliged to go into the country. On his return he thus addressed

his audience :—"You thought of me, then, during my absence. For my part, it was impossible for me to forget you. . . . Even when sleep closed my bodily eyes, the strength of your affection for me opened the eyes of my mind, insomuch that while sleeping I often fancied that I was addressing you. . . . I have preferred to return with the remains of my ailment rather than by staying longer away to do any injury to your charity ; for while I was in the country you were unremitting in the expression of your grief and condolence. This was the subject of all your letters ; and I am not less grateful for your grief than for your praise, since one must be capable of loving in order to grieve as you have done. . . . Hence, as I am no longer ill, let us satisfy one another ; if, indeed, it be possible that we should be satisfied ; for love is insatiable, and the continual enjoyment of it by those whom it endears only inflames it still more. This is what was felt by Saint Paul, that foster-child of Charity, when he said : 'Owe no man anything but to love one another ;' for that debt is always being paid, yet is never discharged." *

Also the following passage, which is quite to the purpose here :—"You are to me in the place of father, mother, brothers and children. You are everything to me, and no joy or sorrow can affect me in comparison with that which concerns you. Even though I may not have to answer for your souls, I should not be the

* Second Homily on Repentance.

less inconsolable were you to perish; just as a father is not consoled for the loss of his son, although he may have done all in his power to save him. That I may some day be found guilty, or that I may be justified before the awful tribunal, is not the most pressing object of my solicitude and of my fear; but that you may all, without exception, be saved, all made happy for ever, that is enough: that is also necessary to my personal happiness, even if the divine justice should have to reprove me for not having discharged my ministry as I ought; although, in that respect, my conscience does not upbraid me. But what matters it by whom you are saved, provided that you are saved? And if any one is surprised to hear me speak in this manner, it is because he knows not what it is to be a father." *

On the other hand, if men ever ought to be loved, if, above all, the heart of the Christian priest ought to be touched, moved even to tears with deep compassion for humanity, this is pre-eminently the time. Doubtless, humanity is deserving of blame, but it is also most worthy of pity. Who, indeed, can be bold enough to hate it? Let us rather grieve for it: grieve for the men of the world who are truly miserable. . . . What truths can they lay hold of to resist themselves, to fill the void in their souls, to control themselves under the trials of life? All have been assailed, shaken, denied, overturned. What are they

* Homily iii. on the Acts.

to do in the midst of this conflict of affirmations and negations? Hardly has a powerful and divine truth been presented to them, than one of those so-called talented men has come forward to sully it by his gainsaying or scornful derision.

Above all, the rising generation calls for our pity, because it has so long been famished. The half of its sustenance has been withheld from it by the cruelty of the age.

But let us do it justice: youth appreciates sincerity and candour above everything. It is straightforward, and hates nothing so much as duplicity and hypocrisy. Well, when a young man awakens into life, what does he see around him? Contradiction and inconsistency, a very Babel of tongues: a discordant, a hellish concert. One bawls out to him, "Reason!" another "Faith!" here some bid him "Suffer!" there others tell him to "Rejoice!" but soon all join in the chorus, "Money, my son, money!" What, we ask, is a youth of eighteen, with all his besetting passions, to do in the midst of confusion like this?

It were well if even the domestic hearth afforded an asylum from this turmoil; but, unhappily, it assumes there its most flagrant form in father and mother. There we find one building up, and the other destroying. The mother prays, the father is prayerless; the mother is a communicant, the father is not; the mother confesses, the father does not; the mother speaks well of religion, the father derides

it. . . . What, we ask again, is a youth to do with his affections under circumstances like these? Reason tells him that if there is a truth, it must be the same for all; if there is a rule of morals, it should apply to all; that if there is a religion, it should be the religion of all. Next, he is tempted to believe that he is being made sport of, and that the words *vice*, *truth*, and *virtue* are nothing but bare words after all. Such is the aspect of things presented to the rising generation; and were it not that there is something naturally good and generous in the hearts of the young, how much would they despise their predecessors in life! . . .

They are told of the existence of duties, laws, and other subjects of vast importance, and yet they see men who ought to be serious spending their time in material pursuits, in hoarding money, or in sensual gratifications.

Is there not in all this enough to distress a sensitive mind, and to lead it to utter the complaint,—"O God! wherefore hast Thou placed me in the midst of such contradictions? What am I to do? My father, the man whom I am bound to resemble most on earth, can I condemn him? Can I any the more blame my mother, or charge her with weakness —my mother, whose influence over me is so strong? What, then, am I to do? What must I become? Is life a desert wherein I am lost? Is there no one to guide me? Those who should direct are the first to

mislead me. My father says: 'Do as I do; follow my example.' My mother, with all the power of maternal affection, says: 'No, no, my son; do not follow your father, for if you do you will perish.'" What shame should we take to ourselves for a state of things like this, and how much should we pity those who are its victims!

And then the lower classes—the people,—who do penance under our eyes in toil and suffering, how can we help loving, how avoid compassionating, them? Undoubtedly, they have their faults, their frailties, and their vices; but are we not more blameworthy than they? The people are always what they are made. Is it their fault if the pernicious doctrines and scandals of the higher orders have stained the lower classes of society? Moreover, they have been treated without pity and without mercy. They have been despoiled of all: even that last resource, hope, has been taken from them. They have been forbidden to dream of happiness. Heartless men have interposed between them and heaven, and have said to them,—"Listen; your toil, your trials, your rags, your hunger, the hunger of your wives and children—such is your lot. You have nothing else to hope for; except, perchance, the pleasures of revelry." They have been deprived of everything: they had hopes of a better future, which have been taken from them; they had God above who has been robbed from them, and they have been told that heaven consisted in the enjoyments of earth. Meanwhile,

they are miserable; and being miserable are, as it were, doomed already: yet, what have they done to merit this?

Yes, there has been no pity shown to the people; for has not the present age regarded Christianity as a delusion? Christianity ought to have been respected among the people, because it benefited them, because it alleviated their wretchedness. But no, a cruel age has had the fell courage to snatch it from them. A tale is told of a prisoner who became deeply attached to a spider, which served to while away the tedium of his captivity. He fed it with his own food, and it was his delight to see it scamper about his cell; but the jailor, noticing this innocent gratification, crushed the insect. . . . The spider was undoubtedly an insignificant thing; but the jailor's conduct was harsh, and all would denounce it as a gratuitously brutal act. Well, then, if religion among the people had been regarded merely as the spider of this poor prisoner, it ought to have been respected, because it might have done them good. On the contrary, the labourer has been denied the hope that there will be a time of rest; the sufferer, that some day there will be consolation; the wronged has not been allowed to anticipate that hereafter justice will be meted out; the mother who deplores the loss of her child has been denied the hope that some day she shall behold him again. Everything has been taken from the people, and nothing has been left

them but material pleasures, to be enjoyed at rare intervals.

What a field is here opened out for the exercise of love, of compassion, and of pity! O ye poor people whom Christ loved! is it that all your struggles and trials are merely a foretaste of eternal misery? If you are to suffer here, and to suffer also after death, then you must needs suffer for ever! But that we cannot allow, and after the example of Christ, we should say to ourselves:—"I have pity upon the multitude, for if I send them away fasting they will faint by the way."

Lastly, on this Charity depends the success of evangelical preaching.

To be co-workers with Christ in regenerating and saving mankind, we must love it as He loved. He first did men good, then He addressed them. Hence it was that the people, unmindful of their most urgent wants, followed Him exclaiming: "Never man spake like this man."

Let us never forget that the object of preaching is to turn men from wrong-doing, and to lead them to that which is good. This is the great aim of the Christian orator. But where is the seat of good and evil, and where are both elaborated? According to the Divine word, "*out of the heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemy."

The heart, then, must be touched, moved, laid

hold of. It is the heart which receives or rejects the truth; which says to it: "Come, I welcome you;" or, "Begone, you annoy me;" and it is love alone that can reach the heart and change it. An Arab proverb runs thus:—"The neck is bent by the sword; but heart is only bent by heart." If you love, you yourself will be loved; the truth from you will be loved; even self-sacrifice will be an act of love. . . . What we most want nowadays is not additional knowledge, for nearly all of us know full well what we ought to do. What we really want is the courage to act, the energy to do what is right. Truth has sadly diminished amongst us, and its characteristics also. What we need, then, is a style of preaching which enlightens and sustains, which threatens and encourages, which humbles and exalts, and which throughout speaks to individuals, saying, "I love thee."

It is not by essays of reasoning, any more than by the sword, that the moral world is to be swayed. A little knowledge, much sound sense, and much more heart—that is what is requisite to raise the great mass, the people, and to cleanse and purify them. To be able to reason is human, very human, and one who is a man and nothing more may possess that ability as well as you, perhaps in a higher degree. But to love, to devote one's self, to sacrifice self, is something unearthly, divine, possessing a magic power. Self-devotion, moreover, is the only argument against which human malevolence can find no answer. . . .

You may employ the most splendid reasonings, clothed in the grandest phraseology, and yet the mind of man will readily find wherewith to elude them. Who knows but that French wit, by one malicious word, may not upset all at once your elaborate structure of arguments? What is required in sacred eloquence is something new, something unexpected. Ask you what it is? It is love; for loving, you will surprise, captivate: you will be irresistible.

For it is useless to disguise the fact that in France nowadays there is scarcely any belief in disinterestedness. Even the people are beginning to think that no one acts without a motive of self-interest; and their thought is aptly expressed in the frank and original reply of a poor devil who was brought before the correctional police for having inscribed some Legitimist sentences on a wall. The president, observing his tattered garments, and his anything but aristocratic appearance, asked him if he was really a Legitimist. "By no means, Monsieur le President," was the answer; "I merely do as others, as you do, as all do nowadays — *I work for those who feed me.*"

But when the people meet with real affection, a thorough devotedness, then they are overcome at once and yield heartily.

You visit a poor family, or one of the working-classes in a large town, where the people are generally frank, and hardly know how to conceal their thoughts.

Do not be surprised, then, if something like the following dialogue should take place :—

"Well, sir, but who pays you for visiting us?"

"Nobody."

"What interest, then, have you in coming?"

"None whatever, beyond that of wishing to benefit you and your little ones, whom I love."

"I can scarcely believe it. There must be something underhand in this."

But when such persons are convinced that you entertain a sincere affection for them—that there is nothing *underhand* in what you do—you become all-powerful. The disclosure breaks in upon them like a divine revelation, and they may be said to love the truth even before knowing it. Then you may speak, entreat, or command ; you will be listened to, you will be believed, obeyed. What else, indeed, could any do who love you, and also inspire love on your part?

It is quite right to reason and to appeal to the intellect, but it is not enough. Human malice will never be at a loss for a reply to your arguments. You may be acute, logical, endowed with learning and talent, the right may be most clearly on your side, and yet your efforts will be unproductive ; nay, you will often be defeated, insomuch that it may be affirmed that he who uses reason only shall perish by reason. On the contrary, love causes things to be regarded from a different point of view, removes diffi-

culties, and imparts light and courage simultaneously.

You say to a worldly woman :—"If you were to occupy yourself a little in good works, such as visiting the poor." . . . Forthwith she starts a thousand objections against the suggestion :—"What, I, in my position! . . . I really have no leisure. I have my house, my children, my servants, and so many other things to attend to. Then, my health is so wretched, and my husband cares for nothing. . . . Besides, it is a woman's first duty to look after her domestic concerns." In a word, she instantly bristles with good reasons. You encounter a pointed defence everywhere, and no gap to admit your arguments. Beware, therefore, of reasoning with her. Go straight to her heart, beget charity within her, make her to feel, to love, and soon you will hardly recognize her as the same individual, for the change will be almost instantaneous, and every subsidiary stumbling-block will disappear. Then she will go and come, suffer, be humble, self-denying, exemplary.

Woman is called the feeble sex. True, when she does not love; but when love takes possession of her soul, she becomes the strong, the able, the devoted sex. She then looks difficulties in the face which would make men tremble.

An orator of high intellectual powers occupies a pulpit, and leaves scarcely any results behind him. He is succeeded by one of ordinary attainments, who

draws wondering crowds and converts many. The local sceptics are amazed. "This man's logic and style," say they, "are weak; how comes it that he is so attractive?" It comes from this, that he has a heart; that he loves and is loved in return. So when a venerable superior of missionaries* wished to learn what success a priest had met with on his tour, he generally asked, "Did you really love your congregations?" If the answer was in the affirmative, the pious man remarked—"Then your mission has been a good one."

Have a heart, then, in dealing with the people; have charity; love, and cause others to love, to feel, to thrill, to weep, if you wish to be listened to, and to escape the criticisms of the learned as well as the ignorant. Then let them say what they like, let them criticize and inveigh as they please, you will possess an invincible power. What a grand mission, what a glorious heritage is that of loving our fellow-men! Let others seek to lord it over them, and to win their applause; for my part, I prefer holding out a hand to them, to bless and to pity them, convinced by a secret instinct that it is the best way to save them.

I have already remarked that our language has not always breathed this broad and tender charity. The injustice and unreason which we have had to encounter have made us somewhat querulous, and we have become champions when we should have remained fathers and pastors. We have followed the world too

* This clearly refers to Home Missionaries.—ED.

much into the arena of discussion. We have fancied that it was enough to prove a truth in order to secure its adoption into the habits of life. We have forgotten that Saint François de Sales converted 70,000 Protestants by the sweetness of his charity, and not one by argument. Nevertheless, strange enough, much is urged on the young clergyman as regards the necessity and mode of proving a truth and of constructing a sermon, but scarcely anything on the necessity and manner of loving his audience.

Just look at the young priest on his entrance upon the sacred ministry. He is armed cap-à-pie with arguments, he speaks only by syllogisms. His discourse bristles with *now, therefore, consequently.* He is dogmatic, peremptory. One might fancy him a nephew of one of those old bearded doctors of the middle ages, such as Petit Jean or Courte-Cuisse. He is disposed to transfix by his words every opponent, and to give quarter to none. He thrusts, cuts, overturns relentlessly. My friend, lay aside a part of your heavy artillery. Take your young man's, your young priest's heart, and place it in the van before your audience, and after that you may resort to your batteries if they are needed. Make yourself beloved,—be a father. Preach affectionately, and your speech, instead of gliding over hearts hardened by pride, will pierce *even to the dividing of the joints and marrow;* and then that may come to be remarked of you which was said of another priest by a man of

genius who had recently been reclaimed to a Christian life :—"I almost regret my restoration, so much would it have gratified me to have been converted by so affectionate a preacher."

I do not mean to say that the truth should not be set forth with power and energy. God forbid! but it should be seasoned throughout with abundant charity. It is only those, indeed, who love much and are themselves beloved, who possess the prerogative of delivering severe truths in an effectual manner. The people pardon everything in those to whom they are attached, and receive home, without recoiling, the sternest truths and reproofs addressed to them by a beloved preacher.

Let your preaching, then, be the effusion of a heart full of love and truth. Skilfully disconnect vices and errors from individuals. Place the latter apart, and then assail the former: be merciless, close up all loop-holes, allow no scope for the resistance of bad passions; tread the evil under foot. But raise up the vicious and erring, stretch out a hand to them, pour confidence and good-will into their souls, address them in language such as will make them hail their own defeat :—"Brethren, I speak to you as I love you, from the bottom of my heart." "Permit us to declare unto you the whole truth; suffer us to be apostles; suffer us to address you in words enlivened by charity; suffer us to save you. . . ."

Thus have we endeavoured to describe the nature,

the power, and the triumphs of apostolical preaching; which should be the same now as it was in olden time.

But apostolical eloquence is no longer well understood. It is now made to consist of I hardly know what: the utterance of truths without any order, in a happy-go-lucky fashion, extravagant self-excitement, bawling, and thumping on the pulpit. There is a tendency in this respect to follow the injunctions of an old divine of the 16th century to a young bachelor of arts:—"*Percute cathedram fortiter; respice Crucifixum torvis occulis; nil dic ad propositum, et bene prædicabis.*"

It is evident that anything so congenial to indolence cannot be apostolical eloquence, which consists of an admixture of truth, frankness, and charity. To be an apostle one must love, suffer, and be devoted.

For, what is an apostle? To use the language of one who was worthy to define the meaning of the word, and who exemplified the definition in his own life:*—"An apostle is fervent charity personified. . . . The apostle is eager for work, eager to endure. He yearns to wean his brethren from error, to enlighten, console, sustain, and to make them partakers of the happiness of Christianity. The apostle is a hero; he is a martyr; he is a divine, a father; he is indomitable, yet humble; austere, yet pure; he is sympathizing, tender. . . . The

* Père Ravignan.

apostle is grand, eloquent, sublime, holy. He entertains large views, and is assiduous in carrying them out for the regeneration and salvation of mankind."

We must return, then, to this broad and tender benevolence. Let our congregations feel it, read it; see it in our persons, in our features, in our words, in our minutest actions. Let them understand that the priest is, before all others, their best, their most faithful friend. Nothing must disconcert our charity. Our heart must be enlarged, and soar above the frailties, the prejudices, and the vices of humanity. Did not Saint Paul say: "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ," for the sake of his erring brethren? And did not Moses elect to be blotted out from the book of life rather than see his cowardly, ungrateful, fickle countrymen stricken by the hand of the Almighty? The weaker men are, the more need have they to be loved.

Such love does good to all. It cheers the heart of the preacher. It also creates sympathy, and those electric currents which go from the speaker to the hearts of the faithful, and from the hearts of the faithful back to the speaker. It reveals what should be said, and, above all, supplies the appropriate accent wherein to express it. Saint Augustine writes: "Love first, and then you may do what you choose." We may subjoin: "Love first, and then you may say what you please;" for affectionate speech fortifies the mind, removes obstacles, disposes to self-sacrifice,

makes the unwilling willing, and elevates the character as well as the mind.

Charity is the great desideratum of the present time. It is constantly being remarked that the age in which we live requires this and that. What the age really wants is this:—It needs to be loved. . . It needs to be drawn out of that egotism which frets and consumes it. It needs a little esteem and kindly treatment to make good all its deficiencies. How silly we are, then, to go so far in search of the desired object, overlooking the fact that *the kingdom of God is within us*—in our hearts.

Be it ours, therefore, to love the people. . . . Is it not to that end that we have no family ties? . . . Let us prevent their hate, which is so harmful to them. Let love be present with us always, according to the saying of Saint Augustine:—"Let us love in speaking, and speak in love. Let there be love in our remonstrances . . . love also in our reproofs. Let the mouth speak, but let the heart love." Yes, let us learn to love, to endure, to be devoted. What! do we not belong to the same family as those excellent and self-denying men who leave country and home to seek and to save souls beyond the ocean? Were we not brought up at the same school? They love infidels, they love pagans and savages sufficiently well to sacrifice everything for them. . . . Are not our pagans in France worth as much as the pagans of Oceania? Are not our French little ones

as deserving of compassion as Chinese children? True, their parents do not expose them on the highways; but they abandon them to shame, to vice, to the education of the streets. . . . It is right that we should commiserate the heathen, that devotion should be manifested on their behalf; but let us have compassion on our own children also, on our brothers in France, that they be not suffered to perish before our eyes. . . . Yes, I invoke pity for this people: pity for their sufferings, their miseries, their prejudices, their deplorable subjection to popular opinion, their ignorance, their errors. Let us, at least, try to do them good, to save them. Therein lies our happiness; we shall never have any other. All other sources are closed to us; there is the well-spring of the most delectable joys. Apart from charity, what remains? Vanity, unprofitableness, bitterness, misery, nothingness.

CHAPTER II.

THE PEOPLE.

The actual State of the People—Their good and bad Qualities—The People in large Cities—The People in small Towns—The People in rural Districts—How to benefit these Three Classes of the People—One powerful Means is to act upon the People through the upper Classes, and upon the latter through the former.

WE shall now assume that you love the people. But, besides that, in order to address them pertinently, you must understand them well, know their good qualities, their failings, instincts, passions, prejudices, and their way of looking at things; in a word, you must know them by heart. To a profound acquaintance with religion must be joined a profound knowledge of humanity as it exists at the present day. But, to speak frankly, the people are not known; not even by the most keen-sighted, not even by our statesmen. They are only studied superficially, in books, in romances, in the newspapers, or else they are not studied at all. Judgment is mostly formed from appearances. One sees a man mad with rage, who insults, blasphemes, or who staggers through the

streets, and he says: "There; behold the people!" Another sees one who risks his own life to save a fellow-creature, or who finds and restores a purse or a pocket-book to its owner, and he exclaims exultingly, "Behold the people!" Both are mistaken, for both substitute an exception for the rule.

In order to understand the people well, we must probe beyond the surface, and take them as they are when they are most themselves. They must be studied in the spirit, as it were, and not on the outside; for they often appear worse than they actually are. Still less should we arrest our researches, as is frequently done, at a point where they clash against ourselves. On the other hand, I feel bound to state that if we do not know the people, they, in turn, do not know the classes of society above them; and it is on that account that we do not love each other as we ought.

At first sight, the French people—the lower orders—are a real mystery: an inconceivable medley of weakness and of courage, of goodness and ill-will, of delicacy and rudeness, of generosity and egotism, of seriousness and of frivolity. It may be said that they possess two natures: one endowed with good sense, which is generous, feeling, and contrite; the other unreflecting, which raves and drinks, curses and swears. On one side they are frivolous, vain, weak, scornful, sceptical, credulous, headstrong.

In their frivolity they jeer at everything; at what

is frivolous and what is serious, at what is profane and what is sacred. Their weakness under temptation is lamentable: they have no restraint over themselves. But, above all, their credulity is unbounded. This is their weak, their bad side; the source of one portion of our evils.

Alas! what may not this people be led to believe? There is no lie so great, no absurdity so gross, the half of which they may not be made to swallow when their passions dictate that anything may be gained thereby, or they conceive that their interests are assailed. At certain seasons of blind infatuation they may be made to believe anything; even that which is incredible, even what is impossible. Unfortunately this is to some extent the case among the higher classes. The people surrender themselves to the first comer who has a glib tongue and can lie adroitly.

Their credulity, as already stated, knows no bounds; especially as respects the rich and the clergy, whom they regard as the cause of all the ills which befall them. Accidents wholly independent of human volition are placed to their account. Is there a dearth? They create the scarcity of corn. Is there stagnation in trade? They restrain the capitalists. Undoubtedly they had some hand in the cholera; and it is not quite certain but that there exists some damnable connivance between them and the caterpillars and weevils. . . . Poor people! yet how they

are deceived! Thereupon their good sense disappears, their heads reel, reflection abandons them, and then they rise up in anger: strike, pillage, kill. . . . They become terrible.

But I hasten to say that if there is evil in the French people, there is also good: much good. They are witty, frank, logical, generous, amiable, and above all, *they have hearts.* This is undeniable; and we should never despair of a man who has a heart, for there is always something in him to fall back upon. When all else is lost to this people, their heart survives, for it is the last thing which dies within them.

It has been said that frivolity is the basis of the French character; but that judgment is incorrect. More truly it should be said that the French character is frivolous outwardly, but at bottom it is generous, combined with exquisite good sense.

Very few are aware how much generosity and sympathy towards all suffering are hid under the jerkin and smock-frock. The people possess an inexhaustible store of sentiment, of the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotedness. Why, then, are they not better understood? The mischievous, indeed, know them too well; for when they would mislead or stir them up, they appeal to their sense of justice, to their love of humanity. They point out to them grievances which should be redressed, oppressions to be avenged. Then are their passions lit up, and they

are carried away . . . we need not tell the rest. The motive on their part was almost always praiseworthy at the outset, in some measure at least; but once led beyond themselves they hurried headlong into extremes.

The heart, then, is the better side of the French people; their honourable and glorious side; their genius. Others may claim the genius of extensive speculations in science and industry; to them belongs the genius of heart, of love, of sympathy, of charity. Endowed with so goodly a portion, what have they to complain of; for is not dominion over mankind achieved thereby? Hence, when Providence designs to spread an idea throughout the world, it implants it in a Frenchman's breast. There it is quickly elaborated; and then that heart so magnanimous and communicative, so fascinating and attractive, gives it currency with electric speed.

If noble aspirations spring from the heart, they nowhere find a more fertile soil; and, strange to say, this excellent gift is found in all classes, and under all conditions. A man may be worse than a nonentity in a moral point of view, but he has a heart still. Would you do him good? aim at that.

But you will say: "Look at those coarse fellows, those besotted clowns sunk in materialism, those men stained with crime and degraded by debauchery, where is their heart? They have none." I say they have a heart still: go direct to the soul, pierce through

that rough and forbidding crust of vices and evil passions, and you will find a treasure.

Proof in point is to be met with everywhere ; even in the theatres, where its manifestation has been noticed by observant spectators. The galleries are generally occupied by persons of all conditions; mechanics, profligates, vagabonds, loose women, and even men, who, to use their own indulgent expression, *have had a weakness:* that is, have spent some years in prison, or at the treadmill. It is gratifying to witness the conduct of that mass during the performance of some touching scene or generous action. They are often moved even to tears—they applaud and stamp with enthusiasm. On the contrary, when mean or heinous actions are represented, they cannot hoot or execrate enough: they shake the fist at the scoundrel or traitor, hurl abuse at him, and not unfrequently more substantial missiles.

It will be said that all this feeling is transitory. So it may be ; still it shows that there remain in such breasts, chords which may be made to vibrate, hearts not yet dead, good sentiments which are capable of cultivation.

Such are the French people taken in the mass; such their merits and defects. The head is not their better part, and they might almost be described as having a good heart but a bad head. In order to lead them, they must be seized where they present the best hold. To do this effectually requires sound

sense and a kindly heart, moderate reasoning, and very little metaphysics. An opposite course, however, is too frequently pursued. Crotchets, fancies, theories, vapid ideas — such is the stuff wherewith attempts have been made to influence them. Is it surprising that they have not always yielded to such guidance?

On points of wit, argument, and right, the Frenchman is acute, punctilious, headstrong. On points of generosity and devotedness he is tractable, liberal, admirable. Demand anything from him as a right, and he will refuse it. Ask the same thing of him, appealing to his heart, and he will often grant it with the best possible grace. But, above all, if you wish to restore him to equanimity and a right mind, get him to perform an act of charity.

To prove that the heart rarely disappears, and that it always retains a hold on the mind, I must be permitted to cite an example combining the good and the bad qualities which are to be met with in the lower grades of society. I shall frequently refer to facts; for in morals, as in many other matters, they bring us sooner to the point aimed at.

It was in one of the most wretched quarters of Paris that a priest went to visit a rag-woman who was dangerously ill. She was lying on straw so damp that it was fit only for the dung-hill. The visitor had reached the landing-place, and was reflecting how he might best minister to the poor woman's wants, when

he heard the cry of another female from the end of a dark corridor, exclaiming: "Help! murder!"

He ran towards the spot, and pushing open a door saw two young children crying. Extended on the floor lay the unfortunate woman, while a tall man with a sinister countenance, and clad only in a pair of pantaloons and a ragged shirt, stood over her, kicking her. Her face was already black and blue from his violence.

The priest sprang towards the man and said: "Wretch! what are you about? Will you not desist?" He did desist, but it was to attack the speaker. He seized him suddenly by the breast, thrust two fingers under his cassock, and then, without uttering a word, lifted him as if he had been an infant, and carried him to an open window. There he angrily told him that he would not have priests intermeddling with his affairs, and *disturbing the peace of his household,* and that he intended to pitch him out of the window forthwith. In fact, he was preparing to put the threat into execution; but, as if wishing to gloat over his victim, he continued to glare at him with the eyes of a tiger, holding him all the while as with an arm of steel.

The priest was alarmed, but God enabled him not to betray it. He regarded his antagonist calmly, and said almost with a smile: "Gently, my friend; you are much too hasty. Do you really mean to throw me out of the window? Is that the most pressing

business on hand? You who are always talking about fraternity and charity; do you know what was taking place while you were beating your wife? Another woman was dying on a dung-heap in your house. I am sure you would be horrified at such a thing. Now, let us both see what we can do on her behalf; for you are by no means such a bad fellow as you wish to appear. I will pay for some clean straw, if you will go and fetch it." Terror, combined with the desire of winning over his assailant, made the priest eloquent, and he had hardly ended his appeal before the lion was tamed. The man's countenance rapidly changed, and he relaxed his hold at once; then taking off his shabby cap and placing it under his arm, he assumed a respectful attitude, like that of a soldier in presence of a superior officer, and replied :— "If you talk in that style, sir, the case is different. I have always been humane, and will readily help you to assist the poor woman. I will, in fact, do anything you please; for it won't do to let a fellow-creature die in that plight." Thereupon the priest gave him the money, and he went out to purchase two bundles of clean straw.

In the meantime the women of the neighbourhood, attracted by the altercation, had rushed to the spot, and on seeing the priest expostulated with him in these terms :—"What are you about? Do you know where you are? You are in the clutches of the worst man in the quarter. He is so outrageous that even

cut-throats are afraid of him, and he has often said that nothing would give him more pleasure than to break a man's neck, especially if that man were a priest." These remonstrances were by no means encouraging; but those who urged them little knew the power of charity.

The sturdy fellow soon returned with the bundles on his shoulder. He was calm, and his countenance had become almost honest. On entering the room where the poor woman lay, he took half a bundle of straw and spread it on the floor. The most touching part of the scene followed. He lifted the sufferer in his arms with the tenderness of a mother, placed her on the clean straw, then made her bed, and finally laid her upon it, just as a mother would her child. A female wished to help him, but he pushed her aside, remarking that he was well able to do a humane act unassisted.

The man was in tears, and the priest perceiving that he wished to address him, retired towards the window. But his new acquaintance could not utter a word; emotion choked him. The priest gave him his hand, and the stalwart workman squeezed it as in a vice, in token of his affection. "Well done, my friend," said the priest, "well done; I quite understand you. I knew full well that you were not as bad as you wanted to make me believe. I knew you were capable of doing a good action." "You have done it all," was the reply; "four men could not master me,

and yet you have overcome me with as many words. *You must be a true parson.*"

The priest hastened to turn this favourable opportunity to profit, by pleading the cause of the wife, and rejoined :—"But, my friend, you have done something which is not becoming. You have ill-used your wife ; and a man does not marry a woman to beat her. I have no doubt she has her failings, and you also have yours. You should bear with one another. Come, promise me that you will never strike her again." At these words, his face assumed somewhat of its former sullenness, and dropping the priest's hand he said frankly :—"I am very sorry that I cannot do as you wish. I will not promise because I should not keep my word." . . . The priest returned to the charge, and among other remarks which made some impression on the man, he was quite brought to bay by the following :—"So you won't promise not to beat your wife ? That is simply because you don't reflect. Surely, you who have just done an act of kindness to a strange woman, cannot, with any decency, continue to beat your own wife." After much hesitation, he pledged his word, backing it with a tremendous oath. Since then, he has never been intoxicated, neither has he once struck his wife. You should have seen with what gratitude the woman welcomed her preserver on his next visit. "What a blessing my acquaintance with you has proved," said she. "Since your last visit you have saved me from two *floorers*. My

husband does not drink now, but he still goes into violent passions. He raises his fist, and I fear he is about to strike me; but he forbears. He calms down at once, and says: 'Tis well for you that that abbé came, otherwise I would have floored you again.'"

Not long after, he was reclaimed to a Christian life; he confessed and communicated, and it is now rare to find a man of more exalted sentiments. He refused assistance from every one, saying that he was able to earn his own livelihood, and to provide for his family. To do this, he worked all day and part of the night also. Peace and comfort were restored to his home, which his wife now likens to a paradise.

To give an instance of his noble disposition, I may mention that towards the end of last December he called on the priest, to whom he had become greatly attached, and said to him with his characteristic frankness:—"I am very sad to-day, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"Why, my friend?"

"Because I am poor. In the course of my lifetime I have suffered misery enough. I have cursed the rich, and that Providence which gave them their wealth. Nevertheless, I don't believe I ever felt the wretchedness of being poor as much as I do to-day; although it is for a different reason."

"What is it, then, my good friend?"

"Well, it is this. Here we are close upon the beginning of a new year, and I wished to make you a small present—for you have been very kind to me—

and I have no money. However, be assured of this, at least, that you have in me a devoted friend, and that I am always at your service. Send me wherever you please ; I would walk barefoot and beat a steam engine to serve you." Then, taking the priest's hand, he added with unspeakable kindness and energy :— " Monsieur l'Abbé, should there ever be another revolution, and any assault be made on the clergy, come and take refuge with me ; come and hide in our quarter, and I vow that many heads shall be broken before a hair of yours is touched."

Such are the people, taken as they are with the good and the bad which is in them. I have again selected my illustrations from among the least favourable specimens, and I may further add that it rarely happens that a priest meets even with abuse from the most depraved. The instance above adduced is exceptional, and arose out of the anger of the moment.

Such, then, are the people generally ; but their characteristics are modified by circumstances of locality, intercourse, and education. There are the people of the large cities, those of small towns, and the people in rural districts. There are also the people who work, and those who are always looking for work and never find it ; with whom the true people are often confounded.

The People in large Cities.

The people in large cities possess, in a high degree, all the merits and defects which we are about to notice.

They are fickle, vain, braggart, improvident, mad after pleasures, and not very moral.

The ease with which they may be duped is astounding. They are readily excited, they clamour, are carried away, strike for nothing whatever, and then they reflect. They live from hand to mouth. When work is plentiful, they squander; when it is scarce, they fast and suffer.

They love money for the pleasures which it procures; and in their estimation a debauch is one of the greatest enjoyments of life.

This latter tendency they have borrowed from the present age; which is somewhat sensual, not to say gluttonous—that term would not be parliamentary—as it would have been called in former times. Nowadays a good dinner is not a matter of indifference to others besides men of high standing. A person of exalted rank was once told that his cook had the talent of adding considerably to his own wages. "I know it," was the reply; "but I hold that we cannot pay a man too handsomely for making us happy twice a day." In fact, in these times, one who can thus serve you out two rations of happiness *per diem* is regarded as a treasure.

Despite the vices, however, which exist in large cities, there are many virtues also to be found among the resident people. They are sincere, generous, disinterested, amiable, and withal extremely witty. In the midst of their hardships, or when exposed to danger, they will often utter sparkling sallies, or laugh good-naturedly at their miseries. They are not rich; but what matters that? They are ever ready to help those who are poorer than themselves. In case of an accident, they will run, work, expose themselves to save others at the risk of their own lives. They are ready to sacrifice themselves for whatever they deem just and right. Unfortunately, in their opinion, the authorities are always in the wrong, and they are never backward to take part against the law.

The more I study the people, the more incomprehensible they appear to me. They are at once sceptical and religious. Watch them in a public house: there they curse and swear, and indulge freely in ribald talk; but if a funeral happens to pass by, they immediately doff their caps, and make the sign of the cross. To-day they will thrash one of their comrades unmercifully; the day after they will adopt an orphan. No class ever had so much need of guidance; of benevolent sympathizing guidance. They drift with the wind under the influence of good or evil counsels. They may become sublime or atrocious, angels of heaven or demons.

The people themselves feel their own weakness

and fickleness, and are occasionally dismayed at it. Some time back, one of them, while looking at the stains of blood which had been shed in a church in the month of September, 1792, was seized with a sudden horror, and, laying hold of the arm of the priest who accompanied him, exclaimed with a shudder:—"I fear those times may return; for, you see, we are unfortunate. We are ill-advised, and are as ready to kill with one hand as we are to embrace with the other."

They require, then, to be under constant guidance.

They always need to have some one near who will sustain and keep them in the right way by appealing to the better dictates of their hearts.

In one respect, such guidance is easier here than elsewhere. You tread on ground which is perfectly well-known. These people can hide nothing. As the saying is, when an idea tickles them, they must scratch it until it finds utterance. Their frankness is occasionally foul-mouthed, and they do not hesitate to blurt it out to your face. Nevertheless, such a style rather pleases me than otherwise. You know, at least, with whom you have to deal; and when such an one says that he is attached to you, he is sincere. God grant that the feeling in every case may be abiding!

They are not tenacious either of their errors, their prejudices, or their passions. It is true that they are disposed to assume airs, to repine, and to threaten.

They declare that they will do this and that; but it is by no means difficult to prevent them from doing it at all. Ridicule their prejudices and their foibles fairly, and with sound sense, and they will surrender them, and you will overcome them all. Moreover, they will not be the last to laugh at their own folly.

Some weeks after the revolution of February, when men's brains were all in a whirl, and every one fancied himself called upon to present us with a better world than that which Providence has given us, Monseigneur D'Amata, Bishop of Oceania, happened to be in Paris. One day he passed by a club in full session. The attendance was numerous, and all ears were bent and all eyes fixed on an orator who was dilating on the benefits of communism. He wound up with the usual phrases: No more poor nor rich; no more great nor small; no more palaces nor hovels; but perfect equality and happiness for all. After which peroration there was a tremendous outburst of applause.

The bishop then asked leave to speak, which being granted, he mounted on a table which served for a rostrum, and spoke to the following effect:—"Citizens, you have just been hearing about communism, and a great deal of good has been attributed to it. I am entitled as much as any man to have my say on the subject. For a long time past I have resided in a country where communism is carried out into practice thoroughly." (Increased attention.) "There everything is common: the land, the forests, rivers,

fish, game, and women. But let me tell you how matters go on there. Nobody works; the fields are untilled; and the inhabitants live on fish and game. When these fail, as the people must eat, they hunt one another. The stronger catches the weaker, roasts him on a spit, and then eats him. Reflect, therefore, before establishing communism, whether such a state of existence would suit you. Should you persist, I would advise you to lay in a good supply of spits, and to sharpen them well, for they will be the most valuable stock under the reign of communism." Whereat there followed an outcry of "Down with communism! Away with communism!"

The People in small Towns.

In small towns, the scene changes and assumes smaller proportions. Little things play the part of great things. A small town is the home, the real classical soil of petty ideas, petty vanities, petty triumphs, and gross backbiting. There all know, salute, and criticize each other. None is more slanderous than the male resident in a small town, except it be his wife. The chief authority of the place is neither the mayor, nor the sub-prefect, nor even the prefect himself. It is public opinion, flanked by its inseparable companion, routine.

The local virtue is not independence of character, but timidity. Every one fears his friends as well as his enemies, neighbours as well as strangers; he fears

for his own *amour propre,* and he fears to give others cause for talking about him.

All this has exercised a pernicious influence over the people in such localities. They are extremely timid, niggardly, insincere, rather hypocritical, and inordinately obsequious. They may be well-disposed to discharge their religious duties; but should there happen to be a free-thinker among them, one who takes the lead in the finance or trade of the place, who might traduce or turn such conduct into ridicule, or bespatter it with some of the blasphemies picked up from among the off-scourings of the 18th century, they do not dare to perform them; they tremble at the idea, so abject is their state of dependence: they have not even the courage to brave sarcasm. This servile deference, which has been ignominiously expelled from our great cities, has taken refuge in our small towns and country districts, where it exercises a tyrannical sway.

On the other hand, the people in small towns are more moral, more provident, less turbulent, and more faithful to family obligations than those in large cities. They, above all others, should not be judged by appearances: by that cold and lifeless indifference which characterizes them. Hence it is that they are so little understood, even by those who come into closest contact with them.

In order to win them, you must attack them boldly. Promote concurrence towards some benevo-

lent object, by grouping your men together, so that they may not feel isolated. Then they will take courage, and will get to understand that it is no disgrace to practise religious duties; or, at least, that in attending to them, they are in fair and goodly company.

To that end, organize a society of St. Vincent de Paul; or, should one exist already, develope it still further. It is no longer allowable that a small town, or even a village, should be without a branch of that institution. The attempt has succeeded in many hamlets; and, surely, there is no inhabited locality so unfortunate as not to possess at least three zealous Christians. If so, they must be created forthwith; otherwise, what are we good for? Have also a Society of Saint Francis Xavier, and an Apprentices' Association. Occupy yourself chiefly with the men; leave the faithful flock in order to seek after the lost sheep; and, above all, let it not be said of you as it is said of certain small towns, that *religion there is engrossed with the distaff.*

The People in rural Districts.

The people in the country are the reverse of the people in large cities. There, everything moves slowly. Results are tardily obtained, but they are more durable.

The peasant is bound to routine; he is diffident, dissembling, susceptible, cunning, and somewhat avaricious.

Above all others, usage and custom are a law to him. He never risks anything novel, or trusts to new faces, but with reserve. He possesses few ideas; but those he has he adheres to as tenaciously as he does to his little bit of land.

He seldom comes straight to the point; he is incapable of saying yes or no frankly, and he must be very acute who can penetrate his thoughts. He will listen to you, and appear to approve all you say; but, in fact, he disagrees with you. He has, moreover, his grain of vanity; why should he not? Is he not a child of Adam, like the rest of mankind? Has he not, like them, preserved the tradition of his noble origin?

Hence he is prouder of being mayor of his *commune*, or an officer in the National Guard, than either a prefect or a marshal of France is of his dignity. And as regards deference, no man is more exacting than a peasant who has risen to the rank of mayor, or become an enriched shopkeeper.

Lastly, the peasant does not possess much acquired knowledge; but he makes up for the deficiency by consummate shrewdness. He must be a sharp person indeed, who can overreach him where money is concerned; unless he can manage to play upon his credulity or his dread of spells and witchcraft.

Nothing can be more perverse, more astute, or more cunning than an old peasant of Normandy or Lorraine. He will expend more craft in disposing of

an unsound horse than our diplomats would in formulating one of those protocols destined to preserve the balance of power in Europe. He will haggle for half-an-hour to gain sixpence on a sheep which he wants to buy or to sell. In other respects, the peasant is generally good-natured, laborious, sober, full of good sense, and religious as well as moral, up to a certain point; were it not for the public-house. His life is capable of easy adaptation to the precepts of the Gospel.

In order to lead him, you must first secure his confidence, take hold of him by his better side, or even by his weak side—which is, his vanity. Ought we not to become little with the little, that we may save all?

But the best way of gaining that confidence is to do him a good turn. The peasant, undoubtedly, relishes kind words, but he likes kindly actions still better; and therein I agree with him.

In other respects, he is by no means exacting. A little forethought on his behalf, a little politeness, a salutation, a manifestation of interest, or a trifling present to his child, will be enough to open his heart, and to make him well-disposed.

When he is bent on doing a thing, never oppose him directly, otherwise he will become restive and obstinate; and if you attempt to lead him to the right, he will show a malicious pleasure in going to the left. Beware still more of pushing him to ex-

tremes; for he may become obstreperous, spiteful, pitiless, and perchance atrocious. Take the peasant by the heart; for, after all, it is the most healthy part of the community generally.

On the Way of doing some little Good to these Three Classes of the People.

Such are the people, with whom we have to deal, and who need to be restored to vital Christianity; seeing that they are, unfortunately, sadly deficient in practical religion, and their manner of life is often far removed from evangelical morality. Still, let us beware of judging that the religious sentiment is extinct among them. The people in France are naturally Christian. There is more religion in the little finger of the people than in the superb bodies of our *demi-savants*.

The people, I say, are still capable of comprehending and of appreciating religion; and whenever their hearts are brought into contact with the Gospel, they allow themselves to be penetrated, ruled, elevated by its influence. Look at them in the presence of a preacher who speaks to the souls of his hearers. Their attention is suddenly riveted, their countenances become animated, their eyes glisten. They listen with an attention and good-will, which one often wishes to see in the most pious audiences. They welcome without a frown the severest truths,

and even applaud those passages which bear most against themselves.

Those are, therefore, mistaken who think that religion has no longer any influence over the masses. It is true that at first, owing to the prejudices and sarcasms of a past age, the cassock is a scarecrow to certain classes. They begin by suspecting. But when the same persons come to know the priest well, when they are once won over by his address, there is no man in the world—neither tribune, nor popular orator, nor demagogue—who ever acquires so powerful a hold over them. It is on that very account that those who distrust the clergy express their apprehensions, and say:—"Their influence is excessive; their preaching should be interdicted; otherwise they may proceed to abuse it, and then we shall all be upset."

This ascendancy is often obtained over the most stubborn and vicious. Condemned felons, despite their vices and their crimes, have been amazed to find themselves amenable to its power. Those who had been confided to the mission of Toulon, remarked:—"How strange it is that we who require armed soldiers to make us obey, nevertheless cheerfully do whatever the priests bid us!" And when the mission referred to terminated, no less than 2,800 of the prisoners partook of the holy communion.

No, the people are not so much estranged from God and Christianity as is thought. We were made to understand each other; but evil passions have

interposed between us and them. They still possess good sense and an inward instinct which draws them towards religion. They feel their need of it, because they feel the need of hope. Religion belongs pre-eminently to them; they are linked to it by their sympathies. Let us, moreover, do them this justice: they, the people, did not give up religious practices till long after the other classes. They held out for more than a century. Errors and scandals descended upon them from a sphere above them, yet they did not succumb. The churches were closed to them, their priests were driven away, even their God was hunted, yet they did not yield. They were pursued even into their cottages, their huts, and their work-shops with licentious books and pamphlets, and they resisted still.

At length, religion was covered with ridicule, the mantle of derision was thrown over it, as it was over Christ, and they were bade in scorn to behold their religion! Then they gave way . . . But the crash did not come till 1830, as the whole world can testify. The people were assailed on their weak side, with taunts and sneers which they were the least capable of withstanding.

But though deficient in evangelical morality, religious sentiment has still clung to them. As a pious and illustrious prelate,* who knows the people well, who loves them, and is beloved in return,

* Monseigneur de Dreux-Brézé, Bishop of Moulins.

remarked to the Emperor, on his way to Moulins:—"I thank your Majesty for having understood that the French nation, left to its natural tendencies, preserves the character of the most Christian nation, and that in spite of many rude shocks, the faith of their fathers is the first want of their hearts."

A dignitary of religion is always venerated by the people. They run to see him and to solicit his benediction.

The visits of Monseigneur the late Archbishop of Paris to the faubourgs, tenanted by a population regarded as the most irreligious and immoral of the capital, may be adduced in illustration of this statement. Crowds of men and women flocked to him, bent under his paternal hand, and held up their squalid and half-naked children to receive his blessing. In like manner, they brought him from all sides chaplets, images, and medals; while those who did not possess such pious articles brought halfpence, that he might bless them; and these they afterwards preserved as sacred relics.

The same soothing influence followed the devout prelate in the streets, the workshops, and the public places. His words had a magic effect everywhere among those hardened and redoubtable denizens of the faubourgs.

It was in a quarter as poor in spiritual as in temporal things that an immense crowd thronged to him, and like the Good Shepherd—like the blessed

Saviour—unwilling to send them away fasting, that is, without a few affectionate words, he mounted some steps, and stood on a landing, which served him for a pulpit. Among the crowd was a group of those men who are at perpetual war with society, keepers of smoking-dens, and worse places too; blacklegs, and setters-up of barricades. They looked at him without removing their caps, and with a sneer on their lips.

No sooner had the prelate begun to speak than there was silence. As he proceeded, one cap was doffed, then two or three more, and soon all heads were bared, in accordance with the rules of French politeness. When the sermon was ended, these men shouted louder than the rest:—"Vive Monseigneur! Vive la Réligion!"

It cannot be denied that the manners of the people are often painful in the extreme; but, then, they have so little to fall back upon, and are surrounded by so many temptations. Ignorance frets them, debauchery degrades them, and, besides, having constantly to struggle against the pinchings of want, it is not surprising that they become, as it were, linked to a necessity which weighs upon them so heavily.

Even we, with all our education, our science, the superior moral atmosphere which we breathe,—are we always blameless? When the people look above them, do they always find good examples in the

higher classes of society? What would you have them think when they see men who ought to be patterns of virtue, when they see, to use their own expression, *respectable scoundrels*, with money in their hands and lying words on their lips, endeavouring to seduce their wives or their daughters?

Nevertheless, they have not lost the courage of truthfulness: a rare thing nowadays. They have still moral energy enough to condemn themselves, to condemn their own mode of life, and to admit that they are wrong-doers. A notorious reprobate, after hearing a sermon, remarked to his companion:—"All right; religion, after all, is not such a humbug as it has been represented." Scarcely any but the people retain such ingenuousness. Elsewhere the truth is not relished, is not recognised, is rather thrust aside as an intruder. Where, I should like to know, among other classes, will you hear the admission:—"I am misled; I am in the wrong?"

The people scarcely ever attempt to justify their failings by reasoning, or to reduce their vices to a system; for there exists in them a sense of justice and integrity which, when they are calm, leads them to confess that they are unworthy to live.

A man* who was in the habit of mixing with the least moral class in Paris, relates that he one day had the following conversation with the father of a family whose union had not been blessed by religion.

* M. Gossin, *Manuel de la Société de Saint-François Régis*, p. 143.

"I must apologize," he remarks, "for reproducing this colloquy in all its original crudity; but I shall invent nothing; I shall merely repeat what was actually said by both parties the first time this *argumentum ad hominem* was employed.

"'I regret to find that we cannot understand each other. What! you persist in maintaining that in seducing the woman at your side eighteen years ago you did nothing wrong?'

"'Nothing at all. I am an honest man; I have never stolen nor committed murder. I was rather gay when young; but there is no harm in that. As to the woman, I did not compel her. Why did she allow herself to be enticed?'

"'Let us speak on another subject. . . . Are all these your children?'

"'No, sir; we have another at home, a young lass named Seraphine.'

"'I am sorry you have not produced her. I should have been very glad to see her.'

"'It is very civil of you to say so, sir.'

"'Is she grown-up?'

"'Tolerably: she is twelve years old. She is getting on nicely with the Sisters, which is very satisfactory. She sews well already, and is a promising girl.'

"'Your boys here are comely and well-behaved, and do credit to the mother's care.'

"'Yes, it cannot be denied that what she does for

them she does thoroughly. She keeps them well washed, and one hears nothing in the morning but "let me comb you; let me wash you." You should see how she souses and scrubs them.'

"'Is Seraphine as comely as her brothers?'

"'Do you hear that, missis? What a goose you are; won't you answer? Well, I will decide for both. On my honour, Seraphine is better looking than any in this house, though we have eighteen lodgers, who have a jolly lot of damsels among them of all shades.'

"(Then looking fixedly at the man)—'In two or three years, Seraphine, who is still a child, will be a very attractive and modest young woman, and she will be a comfort to you. . . . But what would you say if a working-man, doing as you did by her mother, should seduce and dishonour the poor girl?'

"He sprang up almost beside himself, and said:—'What should I say? I would say nothing; but I would murder the villain who dared to inveigle my daughter.'

"'You would be wrong; for the man, according to what you yourself have just said, would be, in your opinion, a perfect man; for he would neither have killed, nor stolen, nor forced your daughter. He could only be charged with having wished to amuse himself a little; which you say is not a crime.'

"Still beside himself with rage, he said:—'Nevertheless, I would murder the wretch.'

"'But, my friend, recall to mind what you have done yourself, and then judge.'

"With tears in his eyes, and pressing the hand of his interlocutor, he said :—'Forgive me, sir; I lied to myself when I said what I did. I was boasting just as many others of us do; but I am better than my stupid speeches.'

"I may add, as a characteristic trait of the human heart, that after this dialogue, the father's emotion at seeing his faults placed naked before him was so strong, that he was seized with a fever which lasted several days; that he subsequently thanked me most warmly for having opened his eyes; and that I have now reason to believe in his complete and sincere conversion."

Are we certain that we should find the same frankness and courage elsewhere?

The people, notwithstanding the bravado common to their class, deplore their failings, and if intimate with them, you will often hear them expressing their regret in some such style as this :—"Pity me, for I am most wretched. Do you think it does not make me uncomfortable to see my wife and children miserable, and to know that I am the cause of their misery? I have made good resolutions a thousand times over, and have broken them as often. My passions and my habits have become so inveterate that I am unable to resist them." . . . They are right; for left to themselves they will never be able to persevere in well-doing. They need the aid of religion, which

ought to be afforded them, and which is by no means an impracticable task. Let us hear no more of those incessant excuses that nothing can be done with them on that score.

Away with all discouragement! Away with all despair! Those who indulge in such feelings do us infinite mischief. They are a most dangerous class in our midst; they will do nothing themselves, and will not allow others to do anything. They try to prevent all good by ceaselessly repeating:—"It will never succeed. . . . There are so many obstacles to be encountered. . . . It is headstrong to attempt it."

This is one of the most hideous sores of the age. Such men accuse others, and yet never seem to reflect that despair is the greatest possible crime in the sight of God.

Nothing can be done with the French people! What, then, have we come to? We admit that something can be done for felons in the hulks, for the pagan Chinese, for American savages, for the cannibals of Oceania. We believe it, for we send them help and missionaries; and yet nothing can be done for our France, for the nation beloved of God and His Church, which sheds its blood and spends its gold for the conversion of the infidels, and where so many heroic virtues still exist! It is a calumny against France. In order to justify your own neglect, you slander your brethren, you expose your ignorance of your country, you ignore the power of the Gospel

and the virtue of the Cross. . . . Know, then, that we may yet regenerate the people. . . . Yes, we can, and if we cannot we ought, for it is a sacred duty; and he who does not discharge his own duty in that respect, has no right to give an opinion about the duty of others.

But what are the means which should be employed to bring the people nearer to the Gospel?

Religion must first be exhibited to them as it really is—beautiful, good, and lovely; and then you may hold it up to them as true, divine, and obligatory. You must first attract them by the senses and the imagination, by sentiment, and by the heart. The people like to be interested, touched, moved. They are fond of sentiment, of festivals, and shows. After a week spent in absorbing material drudgery their poor souls require the breath of the Divine word to animate and cheer them. To them especially religion should be "glad tidings"—should bring them mental repose, refreshment, and peace. We should set out by making them to feel, to love, and to bless; instead of which we begin with reasoning, and end with the same. We have a mania, a rage for reasoning; but make the people love first, then you may reason, and will be understood.

I say that in order to make religion lovely in the eyes of the people, you should exhibit it under its most attractive aspect. Point out the good which it does on all sides, to orphans, to children and their

parents, to the forsaken, to the people themselves, their wives, their daughters, and their fathers. Appeal to their good sense and to their heart. Ask: "Is it not true? I refer the decision to your own judgment." Say to the people, but with overflowing affection:—"My dear friends, do what you will, you will never find a better resource than religion; religion will always be your best stay. . . . When you have spent your all, when the world will have nothing more to do with you, when your bodies shall be worn out by old age and sickness, when from dread of you men will flee from you as from a contagion, you will still find by your bedside a priest or a sister of charity to care for you and to bless you." *

But in order to make religion beloved, you must secure some love for the priest also; for the people confound our cause with that of God. In their estimation, religion is what the priest is; and if they do not love the one, they will hardly entertain any love for the other.

The priest, then, should appear to them surrounded with a halo of charity. He must make himself known: he will always gain by being known. He has been depicted in such dark colours that a true view of him will effectually remove many prejudices, and give occasion to the oft-recurring remark:—"Would that all priests were like this one."

But if the people no longer come to us, we must

* *Le Manuel de Charité.*

go to them. We don't mind going after the heathen of America and Asia; we cross the seas to get at them; whereas there are in our midst—in our workshops, our cottages, and throughout the country—tens of thousands, perhaps millions, of practical pagans. We know this well, we confess it, we deplore it, and yet we hesitate to cross the distance which separates us from them! Poor French souls! Can it, indeed, be that you are not of so much value as the souls of Chinese?

To come to us the people must know the value, the necessity of religion. But do they entertain any such idea? Surrounded as they have been with so many passions and prejudices, is it surprising that they are now insensible and mistrustful? Should we be better than they if we had breathed the same pestiferous atmosphere? If they are weak in the faith, it is our duty to pity them, according to the apostolic injunction:—"We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves."

But one replies:—"I cannot go to the people, for I don't know what to say to them, how to address them." Well, I will tell you. The best way of winning them, and others too, is to know how to listen. That is one of the greatest talents in the direction of human affairs. The man to whom you have listened attentively will always go away satisfied with himself, and with you also.

You do the people good by the bare fact of listen-

ing to them. Let them, therefore, complain and talk nonsense to their hearts' content. Overlook their errors, prejudices, outbursts of passion, and their profanities, too. Let them discharge all the gall which is in their hearts, and then they will be far more tractable. They will tell you that they have no time to practise religious duties; that they have no need of religion; that it is enough to be honest; that they don't believe in another life; that Providence is unjust, bestowing all the comforts on one class, and all the miseries on the other. You may also expect to meet with opprobrious personalities. They will tell you that priests are just like other men; that they only work when they are paid, and so forth. Overlook all such remarks; they are enemies which are taking their departure, and you will have fewer to encounter. Hear all, and be not disconcerted at anything that you hear; on the contrary, after such an explosion, redouble your kindness, assail the heart where your attack is least expected, sympathize cordially with them, give them a hearty shake of the hand, and on leaving say with candour:—"Well, well, I perceive that there is good in you. At all events, you are frank, and I like frankness. You are not as bad as you think. I will call again to-morrow and have another chat with you." In this way you may baffle the most diabolical ill-will.

Then, when a friendly footing has been established, you may refer to the most salient objections and

errors, and your words will be like so many gleams of light. Who knows but that the individuals themselves will not be the first to say :—"I know what you are referring to ; but make yourself easy on that score, for *much that I said the other day was in order to get rid of you.*"

Occasionally, you will have to deal with a blunt and surly character. Ask such an one, in an affectionate manner, after he has expended his curses and oaths :—"Is that all that you have to urge against religion and society ? It is all you know, perhaps ; but I could tell you a great deal more. You have forgotten this and overlooked that," till at length he will be induced to say :—"I perceive that you are bantering me ;" and he will never afterwards repeat his objections or his imprecations.

But, good God ! why are we so much startled and horrified when we hear such profanities ? It is the very way to increase the evil. Are we ignorant of what a man is who is vicious, or ignorant, or passionate ? Does he always know the drift of his words ? The man of the present age has a special claim to the pardon which the Saviour prayed for on the cross. Besides, the profane man is not always so far from God as is thought ; such an one is not the most difficult of conversion. A very witty man, speaking of another whose restoration to religion has since gladdened the Church, remarked :—"I begin to have hope of him ; for when one talks about Christianity to him

he is annoyed, and blasphemes." We have the besetting foible of readily believing those who tell us that they have no faith. They must, indeed, regard us as most credulous simpletons when they see us approach them with a cart-load of argument to prove to them what they already know as well as we do, or what they would know if their poor hearts were a little less diseased.

Here, again, we see that charity must initiate and direct our efforts. As to subsequent measures, if you would win over the people, if you would acquire an irresistible influence over them, busy yourself in what concerns them, and be unremitting in your care of their poor. I will even go so far as to say, make a semblance of taking this interest in them, and you will gain a great ascendancy over them, your words will have a magic effect upon them, and they will be ready to overlook every thing else in you, even the fact of your being a priest. . . . This is a subject deserving the serious consideration of those who have a hearty desire to labour for the salvation of souls.

A priest enters a workshop, say, of gunsmiths. On perceiving the cassock, those blackened figures immediately become blacker still. They purposely turn their backs, in order to give him no inducement to address them, and should he do so, the reply is generally a curt "Yes, Sir," uttered in as dry and morose a tone as possible. He walks through the establishment, and meets everywhere with a similar

reception. Meanwhile, one of the workmen whispers something to the foreman, which the priest fancies may be a suggestion for his immediate expulsion; but he is speedily re-assured. What passed is transmitted from one group to another, and suddenly the countenances and hearts of all undergo a change. Instead of turning their backs, the workmen now move sideways, as if to invite a colloquy as the visitor moves along, and before he utters a word, they all stand ready, with cap in hand, to welcome his address. The men become at once polite, amiable, charming—Frenchmen, in fact, in the best meaning of the word. The whispered sentence was the sacramental saying of the poor:—"This priest is kind to the unfortunate; he loves the people; he is not a proud man." Oh, wondrous power of charity; how little art thou understood? and yet thou canst thus tame even the most unruly! We hear much on all sides about the best means of enlightening and reforming the people, and of preventing them from harbouring envy and hatred. What is really required to that end is, as we have been endeavouring to show, the exercise of charity.

But, further, would you acquire an unlimited sway over the people? Would you exert a divine power over them? Become poor, and live in a humble dwelling. Herein I no longer insist on duties and obligations; I merely give the counsels of charity, and the reader may, if he pleases, skip over the next

few lines. Yes, unfurnish your house for the poor; send your silver plate, if you have any, to the money-changer; send your fauteuils and your couches to the fancy warehouse; give one of your mattresses to him who has none; send your clock to the pawnbroker, and let your watch go and exchange places with it occasionally. Contend for your left-off clothes and linen with your old housekeeper, who will threaten to be seriously vexed if you attempt *to rob* her of her perquisites. Accustom yourself to privations. Have a room like that of the Cardinal Cheverus: a small table and a chair constituted the furniture, a truck bedstead covered with a light mattress formed his couch, and the most miserable room in his palace was that which he chose to occupy.*

Do this, and then speak and act, and you will be listened to, believed, blessed, worshipped. Your heart will overflow with joy, so much so that you may be induced to say:—"I fear lest I am receiving my reward here, and that none awaits me in heaven."

Such voluntary poverty not only impresses the people, it exercises also a powerful influence on the highest intellects, transforming and disposing them to acknowledge the truth.

A person who had taken a prominent part in public affairs made the following remarks after an interview with an eminently pious man:—"What most impressed me was not his language, which, nevertheless, was

* *Vie du Cardinal*, p. 316.

powerful and keen; but it was his furniture, his wretched pallet, his three rush chairs and rickety table—all which formed a most appropriate framé, so to speak, to his anchorite figure. I returned home saying:—'I have seen something divine.'" These are ways of doing good which cost little, and are within the reach of every one.

But to return. As I was remarking, the priest must be known and loved, in order that, through him, religion may be known and loved. To attain this, let him first appear to the people as *full of grace*, and afterwards as *full of truth*. Let love precede truth, and then the latter will enter into the heart as into its own domain. Argument must be avoided, lest we drive the man of the people to the miserable vanity of setting himself up as an enemy to Christianity. Above all, we must be on our guard against humiliating any one; for it is very easy to reduce a man to silence by a witticism, or to make him fall into inconsistency when he is not a Christian. With the reason of God it is always possible to nonplus the reasoning of men.

In a word, we should consult our hearts much, and our heads only a little. Yes, let us love the poor people, who have been so little loved during their lives. Are not the people the most notable part of our family? I mean of the priest's family; for we have no other to love. It is true that we do not find its members very amiable at first; but we soon get attached to them: we even become enthusiastic about them, and

experience a sincere pleasure in associating with those dear *mauvais sujets.* Especially must we bear with the weak, with the smoking flax and the bruised reed. We must have a kindly word for all: a smile for this one, a salutation for that one, a picture for the little child of the more depraved. That child will love us; the mother will like nothing better than to do the same, and perchance the father may follow. . . . In a word, we must bring into play all the assiduities and the holy wiles of charity.

I conceive that the blessed Saviour lived and acted in this way, in the midst of that wicked nation which put him to death. He began by doing good —*cœpit facere;* and then He taught—*docere.* He healed, He comforted, He pitied, He ate with sinners, He took the part of the guilty woman, He deplored the impending ruin of His country.

Seize every opportunity of mixing with the people and of showing them kindness; even those who seem the least promising. Are not all a source of good to those who love?

You are a priest, and in walking along hear some one imitating the cry of a raven. Such an occurrence is less frequent now, but it happens occasionally. You recognize a human voice, for you hear the accompanying remark:—"It will be foul weather to-day, and some misfortune will befall us, for the ravens are on the wing." Take no notice of the ill-nature, and do not assume a proud or disdainful

demeanour. It is vulgar to do so, and by no means Christian. The first chance comer could do no more. But, with a gracious smile on your countenance, and fervent charity in your heart, and, above all, avoiding anything like irony, accost the man somewhat in this style:—"So, my friend, it seems to amuse you to cry like a raven. I am glad of it. There is so little enjoyment in the world that I am gratified to have given you a moment's pleasure. Besides, you are quite right; our dress is as black as the raven. Nevertheless, if you knew us well, you would discover that we are not as bad as our dress is black. But, what are you doing here?" This will lead to conversation, explanations will follow, a good understanding and mutual esteem will be the result, and you will take leave of each other with a hearty shake of the hand. Thus, an embittered spirit may be restored to calm and to a better judgment; you will have made a friend yourself, and perhaps gained one over to God; for who can tell to what a favourable issue such simple beginnings may lead? God be praised! many souls have been reclaimed to religion and to society by similar means.

I must forewarn you, however, that success will not always attend your efforts. You will often encounter obstacles, and even opprobrium; but what then? To a Christian, that will not be the worst feature in the case. Thereby, in the first place, you will learn to be more a man; for one who has never

known strife and conflict, victory and defeat, is not a man: he has not lived; he does not know himself, he does not know others; he is ignorant of the science of life. He is an imperfect man: a man who has come short of manhood; because he has never fallen back upon himself to discover the treasures which Providence has hidden there. He will never be a man to initiate, or a man of action. It is only obstacles and contests which form useful as well as great men. There is, somehow, a most unreasonable tendency in us always to be sure of success; and yet our blessed Lord expired in anguish, He. . . .

As to jeers and sarcasms, you may fully reckon on them. Occasionally, moreover, you will be made to act the part of a dupe or ninny. So much the better; such experience will serve as a useful counterpoise to our natural arrogance. Such things are trifles compared with what our missionaries have to endure among the infidels. They brave the sword, and we are afraid of needles' points, and call our fear prudence. But why this dread of being derided? Can it be that we are ignorant of the French people? Are we not aware that they must banter or ridicule some one, even though it be a benefactor? What else can we expect? It is their nature; but they are sterling at bottom. Join, then, to all your other benevolent actions, that of allowing them occasionally to sneer at you. Should an opportunity offer, say to them, in the words of St. Chrysostom:—"I give you

leave to turn me into ridicule; I will forgive all the evil which you may say of me, on the express condition that you become less wicked and less unhappy." Here, then, we have another means of touching the heart; for even revilers will find it difficult to help loving one who thus throws himself upon their mercy, and sacrifices self for their welfare.

A priest who was in the habit of visiting prisons, acting like a clever man, generally addressed the most obstinate of the inmates, and made it a point to enter into conversation with the groups which appeared to be the most vicious and ill-disposed, knowing that if these were converted the rest would probably follow. He was specially gracious to the more impious, so much so that the remark was often made to him by one and another:—"Don't you remember that it was I who abused you the other day?" "Of course I do," he replied; "but do you imagine that I care for abuse? On the contrary, I consider myself rather lucky when I get a good round of it, and feel to like the abuser the more. Besides, I was fully convinced that you were better than your language might lead one to believe." When he retired, the observation was frequently made:—"There's a priest unlike the rest. He acts up to his religion. I don't know but that I shall confess to him;" and the veiled intent was often carried into practice. . . . Act in this way, and you will be loved more and more; and when men have learned

to love the servant on earth, they may perchance learn to love his Master who is in heaven.

This done, you will have made a good beginning, and you must persevere by presenting religion under its most attractive aspect. Generally, however, religion has been exhibited to the people in a manner which imposes too great a restraint on individual liberty.

We should talk less about what religion forbids, and a little more of the benefits which it imparts. Don't be always saying :—"Religion forbids this, and that, and the other thing;" for you will turn the people against it, and will be charged with insisting on what is impossible. We Frenchmen are very children of Adam—and of Eve too. It is quite enough for a thing to be forbidden to induce us to do it. We have a ravenous taste for the forbidden fruit. For instance, a man curses and swears in your presence. Don't tell him that it is a sin, an abominable habit; for he will then take a malicious pleasure in repeating his profanity. Tell him rather that it is unseemly, that it is vulgar, that it shows bad taste, and he will abstain; for all, even the most depraved, wish to be thought well brought up. Let us therefore talk less of vices and more of virtues.

Let us now suppose that you are brought in contact with a crafty and narrow-minded class of persons. Disconcert all their manœuvres by a straightforward and sincere address, and by a still more frank demeanour, always combined with discretion.

Then there will be no gratification in deceiving you. Above all, never resort to underhand measures, and carefully avoid slander. The people hate them: and God and His truth have no need of a secret police.

When you have to deal with an egotistical and slanderous set, never speak of egotism or slander; but scatter love broadcast among them, make the good chords of their hearts vibrate, filling them with the holy palpitations of charity towards their brethren. Thus slander and egotism will vanish, according to the saying of St. François de Salis:—"When there is a fire in the house, everything is thrown out through the windows."

In large cities, where the people are quick, bustling, and petulant, your speech should be lively, frank, bold, winning, and irresistible, that it may cause their hearts to thrill with emotion, and excite their interest by occasionally drawing a smile from them. In small towns, on the contrary, be less bold and more circumspect, and let it be your first aim to acquire the confidence of the people. Study your ground well, the prevailing prejudices, and even the local routine.

Novelties often engender distrust. To gain currency for them, you must secure the affections of your charge, and soar above petty ideas and feelings. Be impassible and kind in the midst of the puerile interests which surround you. Be just, for the people love justice: they even love a severe man who is just;

how much more, then, will they regard such an one if he is benevolent also? Confidence once restored, go to the main point; stir up men's consciences, appeal to the better part of human nature, and throw routine overboard. Bring religion into close contact with those hearts which seem so cold, and you will witness things unknown to those who believe these people to be indifferent or hostile, simply because, as is often the case, the people in small towns are not known. They are looked at too near, they are judged by the exterior, and almost always by those characteristics wherein they clash against ourselves.

There is another reason why you should keep aloof from the narrow-mindedness above mentioned. One frequents certain excellent families of the locality who are devoutly inclined and are munificent to the Church. There is no harm in that; but it often happens that these worthy persons have rather contracted views, and are not altogether exempt from petty passions. They are fond of hearing and repeating some ill-natured gossip, or the least edifying news of the day; and as we are all apt to acquire some of the ideas of those with whom we associate, one comes at length to look at things with their eyes, and finally adopts some such style as this:—"My parish is this, my parish wishes that;" whereas, if matters were closely analyzed, it would turn out that the alleged wish of the parish is confined to a few of those aforesaid pious souls.

The next false step is to adopt a self-conceited course of action and of religious teaching, wholly irrespective of the Catholic Church : nothing is thought of what may be done elsewhere. "Success can only be achieved in such a way," becomes the expression of this self-sufficiency ; while those who fall into it grow exclusive and empirical, and forget that, thanks be to God, the ways of doing good are multifarious, and among them such as are suited to all dispositions and characters. Nay, it will be fortunate if this conceit does not assume to have done all that could be done, and to deny the possibility of others doing better or more. Happy indeed is the man who can truly bear such a testimony to himself! We war against prejudices : let us therefore beware of entertaining any ourselves, for they are not the easiest enemies to be dislodged. Yes, we sometimes circumscribe, we confine the beautiful Catholic religion within the small town where we ourselves reside ; we recognize it there, and there only ; it is taught as it should be only there ; no good can be done except what is done there, whether that said small town be called Quimperlé or Saint-Pierre-de-Chignac.

As regards the people in rural districts, who are dull, timid, susceptible, and rather gross, you must strive to open out their souls in order that religion may penetrate them. They are not over-exacting, not having been spoilt on that score, and a very little attention satisfies them. A token of good-will,

a salutation, an act of politeness, a trifling gift bestowed on their children, will suffice to attract them towards religion; for, generally speaking, when it is properly presented to them, they are attached to it: they love it, they are proud of their Church and of their curé, and are ready to fight to prove that he is the most accomplished priest in the kingdom.

The peasant must never be provoked or pushed to extremes. When he resists, don't attack him in front, but turn the difficulty by laying hold of one of his weaker points, some one of the good fibres of his heart; otherwise the more you talk and threaten the more he will consider it a duty not to listen to you.

Never be at variance with any one. The priest should have no enemies, and should not be content while he has any. I do not like to hear the remark: "That man is my enemy." Christ never said so; but He did say:—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

One of the most effectual ways of gaining over the peasant, as well as the people generally, is to show great confidence in him, and to raise him in his own eyes. Don't be chary either of encouragement or commendation when he has but partially deserved them. Suppose him to be all that you could wish; you will thereby pave the way to impart some useful truths to him. Exalt his good qualities in his own estimation. He has fallen so low that you need not be afraid of making him vain, or of raising him too

high. May you rather succeed in exalting him to heaven! Did not Christ come to raise the fallen? Carrying about with him, as man does, the remembrance of his noble origin, he finds it very hard to resign himself to being a nonentity on the earth. For my part, I prefer a little vanity to the mania of envy and hatred.

In this respect also, timidity has led to our passive co-operation with the malevolent. We have suffered the people to be too much depressed. We have allowed them to be practically told that they are nothing and the rich every thing; that the lot of the disinherited poor is toil, misery, and contempt; that of the rich, affluence, enjoyment, and honours. Rather raise the people by telling them, in the accents of truth, that they are great in the estimation of God and the Gospel; that they have their share of dignity and honour, and have no cause to envy others.—"My friends, the rich have their advantages and you have yours. They have their joys and so have you. Beware of envying them. A good workman! why, such an one is the spoilt child of Providence. You are mistaken in thinking that wealth alone brings happiness. The rich happy, indeed! How can any one be led into such a delusion? You know not what they have to suffer: their sufferings are fearful; and if I wished to discover the most poignant sorrows on earth, I should not knock at the hut or cottage to seek for them. I should knock at the gates of those

splendid mansions which adorn our squares. It is there, behind those triple curtains, that I should find them with their claws of iron embedded in broken hearts. . . . My friends, with a stout heart and two strong arms you may be as deserving, as happy, as great, as noble as any one."

But this must not only be said; the people must be treated in such a manner that they may understand it. We must respect them much, in order that they may learn to respect themselves; showing them always due deference: as, indeed, we should show all men. In a word, we should practise, in our dealings with the people, all the decorum and refined politeness of the drawing-room; with greater sincerity, to boot.

For, indeed, they have more need of such treatment than others. As manifested towards them it would be novel and efficacious; elsewhere it is generally vain and barren. This kind of politeness charms and raises them out of that moral degradation, the remembrance of which besets and weighs them down. So treated they will cease to hate, to envy, or to chafe; and will learn to love, to be resigned, to have better aspirations: and, withal, they will bless you.

The best way to direct, to benefit, and to reclaim the people to religion, is to develope the good sentiments which lie dormant in the recesses of their hearts; the foremost of which is charity, or the spirit of self-sacrifice.

France is the home of charity: it exists among

the high, the low, and the middle classes. The people are naturally sympathizing. As already remarked, it is a pleasure to see their readiness to oblige. The rich class are charitable ; but are they more so than the popular classes? I will not judge; I prefer saying to all : " Well done ; onward ! "

If you wish to inspire a man of the people with good-feeling, calm, and a love of the truth, prevail on him to perform a charitable act. Get him to comfort or to relieve some one, even though you undertake to compensate him for so doing.

When you meet with a hasty or passionate man, do not adopt the ill-timed and absurd method of arguing with him. Is he capable of understanding you ? He is drunk with rage, and such intoxication is more terrible and brutifying than that with wine. In attempting to argue with him, you are like the woman who sermonizes her husband on his return home with his reason drowned in liquor.

Rather take the man, and induce him to undertake an act of charity. Talk to him about humanity, get him to help a fellow-creature, and after that you will hardly recognize him as the same individual. That act of generosity will transform him ; will raise him in his own eyes, will give him holy joys, will draw him towards God, will reconcile him to himself and to humanity. God be praised for having brought down charity to our earth ! It blesses him who receives, and him who bestows it.

The people are specially capable of appreciating disinterestedness, the spirit of self-devotion. It is their element, and constitutes the largest share of their happiness.

But latterly they have been treated harshly and cruelly. Wants, aspirations, and desires have been fostered in them which can never be gratified, and their life has been poisoned thereby.

Much has been said about ameliorating their condition. So far well; but that amelioration has been made to consist, in a great measure, of material enjoyments, of more to eat and drink: in fact, of feasting. In former times they lived on rye bread and were not unhappy. Now they have wheaten bread, and meat with it, and even coffee; yet they complain and are not content. A want should not be created among the people, unless there is a certainty of its being amply and always provided for.

The people, however, are not always won over through their appetites; they prefer being led by the nobler instincts of the human heart. They like what is grand, what is costly, and what is obtained by great sacrifices. They have not, in any degree, the *bourgeois* tastes, the *bourgeois* petty calculations, the *bourgeois* love of little comforts. They are much more disinterested than is thought. We must not attempt to gain them over by their material interests solely: that would be to ruin them and ourselves also; but, allowing them a due share of such induce-

ments, we should rely mainly on their generosity and devotedness; for the people really admire great actions, great achievements, and the great characters who bear sway over the destinies of mankind. They entertain a species of worship for them; they refuse them no sacrifice. They attach themselves to their good or evil fortune, and with them they are always popular, always abiding.

The wars of the Revolution and of the Empire have weighed heavily upon France, have levied the tax of blood on many families; nevertheless, the name of the Emperor is still surrounded with a magic halo. Moreover, in the east of France, the marches and counter-marches of armies, with two successive invasions, have devastated the country, over-burdened the peasantry with imposts, and altogether ruined many of them. For all that, enter any cottage there, and you will find the picture of Napoleon by the side of the image of the Virgin. Even on the field of battle, amidst showers of shot and shell which decimated their ranks, the brave children of the people exclaimed in death: "Vive l'Empereur!" Such are the French people at heart: if there is a tendency in them to seek their own interests, there is a tendency in them, equally strong, toward devotion and self-sacrifice.

If, then, you would give them a right guidance, speak to them of other than petty ideas and material enjoyments: the more so, because, if you attempt to

win them over by such low motives, they will become insatiable; their appetites will get the mastery over them, and plunge them into every kind of excess. Material enjoyments, indeed! It may be questioned whether France, with all its fertility, and all the resources of its advanced civilization, would suffice, in that case, to furnish their first repast.

In order to elevate, to control, and to satisfy this great colossus, the people, you must be provided with something more than human, something mysterious, surpassing human views and human reason; otherwise, you will continue powerless, and will never bring about any moral improvement in the world.

'What has become of our great men, who trusted in man, who appealed to reason only, however exalted that reason may have been? Where is now their ascendancy? Where the devotion which they have kindled? Where are the masses who have clung to their good or evil fortune? They fall, and their fall is regarded with indifference. Even in prosperity, do they secure attachment? Do they acquire a permanent sway over the hearts of men? Not in the least; respect, and esteem, and even fidelity are meted out to them according to their characters, or according to the benefits which they are judged to have conferred on us. "That man is worth so much: he possesses so much learning, so much talent, and may be so far profitable to me. He only deserves so much consideration; I owe him nothing more." That

is his account fully made up. A halo of superhuman radiance should surround him who would govern the masses—something divine, infinite, presaging immortality, heaven, hell, eternity . . . otherwise, you will continue to have a degraded, besotted, or savage people: a people who, in the country, are sunk in materialism, encroach on their neighbour's field, or become the prey of usurers;—who, when their asses are diseased, will call in a veterinary surgeon, but will let their wives suffer rather than pay a doctor to attend them; who will weep over the break-down of one of their horses, but find no tears for the death of an aged parent;—a people who, in towns, find all their pleasures and happiness in rioting and debauchery; who are never well; who accuse others of their sufferings; and who, after squandering their own substance, appeal to others, with hate on their lips and a sword in their hands, saying:—"Now, we will share with you."

The best means of reclaiming them to religion is, first, to get possession of their ideas, their instincts, and their good feelings. We must enter in at their door, and make them go out by ours. Bind, rivet religious thought to their thought—to those sentiments which cause their hearts to vibrate most, and then elevate their souls; wean them from the prepossessions of earth, from indifference and evil passions, and impart to them the joys of religion and charity.

Take advantage of any occurrence, of any great

event, of a fire, a calamity, an illness. . . . A fire reduces a poor family to ruin. Appeal for aid, placing yourself at the head of the movement, and the result will surprise you. A labourer falls sick, and his fields remain untilled. Call his fellow-labourers together, and they will be glad, they will forget their own interest, to come to the assistance of their suffering comrade. The people of France are not known; the spirit of self-sacrifice and generosity which is in them is not known. It may require some great occasion to develope it. Well, it is for you to bring it about.

For instance, you wish to restore a church or to build a new one, and require a considerable sum of money for the purpose. So much the better; out of that requirement, you may draw treasures of charity and religion.

Enter the pulpit and state your object; be like a father in the midst of his family. Set the whole case before them, your fears, your hopes, your need, and then add:—"We rely upon you. You will aid me, will you not? for I shall take the lead, and this will be our church."

You will then witness how the old French and Christian enthusiasm may be rekindled in the hearts of the people, insomuch that you will be tempted to ask:—"Are we really in the 19th century? Are we not still in the middle ages?" All will co-operate: the poor man will offer his two arms, workmen will give their day's labour, the agriculturists, if there be

any, will supply carts; this one will give money, another wood, a third stone; here windows, and there ornaments will be presented. Who knows but that some, who have never been accustomed to work, will offer to aid in the building? The little *bourgeois Voltairien*, who has been known to speak evil of God and of His curé, even he may wish to have a hand in the erection of the church; so that all will thereby be brought nearer to God, nearer to the truth, and nearer salvation.

Similar things have occurred in every part of France; though few have any conception of the existence of such a spirit among the people. We have even heard venerable pastors exclaim on witnessing it:—"I have held this parish for twenty-five years without knowing of it. I could not have believed that my parishioners had so much good in them."

Haymon, abbé of Saint-Pierre-sur-Dives,* tells us that in the middle ages, kings and mighty men of the time, renowned and wealthy, nobles of both sexes, stooped so low as to lay hold of the ropes attached to the carts laden with provisions and materials for building churches, and drag them to the house of God. And what appeared most astonishing was, that although, owing to its size and heavy burden, the cart was sometimes drawn by upwards of a thousand persons, so profound was the silence maintained that nobody's voice was heard above a whisper, and the

* *Manuel de Charité*, p. 244.

eye alone could recognize particular individuals in that vast multitude.

Similar spectacles may be witnessed again. Scenes akin to them occur frequently in the least religious parts of the country, and under the most adverse circumstances. One such took place during the present year at the prison of St. Pélagie.

Two years ago, a new parish was formed in one of the most miserable quarters of Paris, where the people were almost pagans. An appeal was made to their charity, and five hundred francs, in *sous*, were collected after the sermon. Moreover, the poor brought gifts of bread, and wished to help in the erection of the church. Two poor women brought the fire-wood which had been given to them by the *Bureau de Bienfaisance.* Many brought their rings and wedding presents. Working men clubbed together to ornament the church; and, what is better still, now that it is built, they go there to pray. O people whom Christ loved, how little are ye known! how little beloved! Ye would be saved . . .

To sum up: in order to benefit the people, they must be cared for; they must be loved, must be made to love all that is good and great, and then you may lead them where you will. Charity is popular in France. Above all, succour the unfortunate; do so bountifully, and you will gain an ascendancy which nothing will be able to wrest from you. You may then defy the criticisms of wits, of the press, and of

hate, and retain possession of the most glorious sovereignty in the world—that over the hearts of men.

We must insist, therefore, on the necessity of giving the people a right direction; not the dry and cold direction of a metaphysical argument, or of a sword's point, but a benevolent, sympathetic, devoted impulse. . . . We have not busied ourselves as we ought about the people, about their moral amelioration. We have abandoned them to the intriguing and ambitious, and then we complain of and reproach them. Have they not as much reason to murmur against and to upbraid us? The people are what they are made. They are like those unclaimed lands which belong to the first occupant: they are good or bad according as they are well or badly managed; and, looking at the manner in which the people have progressed for the last ten or twelve years, it would hardly seem that they have been under the direction of honest men. What have we done? What masters have we given them? To what school have we sent them? To the school of the tavern, the liquor-vaults, and debauchery. And who have been the masters of this great French people? Men over head and ears in debt, bankrupt tradesmen, briefless barristers, peddling tipstaffs—such have been their educators; and yet, forsooth, we have the face to complain that they have been badly brought up! What ought to surprise those who know the temptations and allurements to which they have been

exposed, and the kind of literature which has been put into their hands—no less than eight millions of mischievous books every year by colportage alone—is, not that the people are so bad as they are, but that they are no worse. Their nature must be good at bottom, and Christianity must still survive in their hearts, to have withstood as they have done. I deplore the good which is ours no longer; but I bless Providence for that which still subsists.

We have, in truth, played into the hands of the designing and malevolent; for when we have seen them set on the people, overwhelming them under a crushing load of errors, prejudices, and antipathies, instead of taking part in the contest, we have too often stood aloof, and contented ourselves with the vain deprecation, uttered perhaps with a smile of disdain:—"They are being taught what is unreasonable and will not bear examination!" Very true; but do the people examine? When a bad press has been active, lavish, and amusing withal—when it has followed them into their workshops, their cottage, in fact, everywhere—how did we act? Why, we gave them some wearisome treatises which were either puerile or crammed full of metaphysics. Good heavens! when shall we be brought to understand that the people do not reflect, that they look, listen, and then go forward? They need some one to guide them, and if honest men do not undertake the mission, they will find others who will. . . .

To aid us in affording that guidance, we should invoke the co-operation of the higher classes, inducing them to exert themselves for the moral amelioration of the people. Here, again, we have another rich mine to be worked which has been greatly neglected, but whereby all may be benefited. The people must be morally reformed by the rich, and the rich by the people.

Alas! we often have to deplore the little effect which our words produce on the higher classes. But why should you expect them to understand us? They have no longer the Christian sense; they do not wish to endure, their aim is to enjoy themselves. They are devoured by sensualism and hardened by egotism. To remedy this, begin by dipping their souls in the waters of charity; teach them the way of self-sacrifice and devotion; enlist them in efforts for the moral benefit of the people, their children, and the poor, and then you will be listened to.

This kind of charity is readily understood in France. All of us have some sort of pretension of wishing to do something for the moral welfare of the people, even though we may not be strictly consistent in our own morality. But the French mind is so logical that it cannot play such a part for any length of time without being bettered thereby, were it only for shame's sake or out of self-respect. Something within will say:—"Before attempting to reform others, I shall do well to reform myself." Then charity will attract heavenly

blessings, and the heart will open itself to the inspirations of the Gospel.

If, therefore, you wish to convert or reform a man, set him to reform one somewhat worse than himself. You will succeed much more readily in that way than by argument.

Take the case of a young man whose virtue is more than wavering, and the flights of whose imagination cause you anxiety. Set him at work to reform others, or to make the effort on some notorious offender. He will do his part wonderfully well; his own virtue will be strengthened and confirmed thereby, and you will have given beneficent scope to an exuberant vivacity which the youth himself did not know how to utilize.

It is related that a president of the society of Saint Vincent de Paul had reason to fear that some of its members failed to discharge their Paschal obligations. There were, at the same time, several poor families to be converted, and he committed the task to the suspected defaulters. The result was that they were the first to partake of the Holy Communion. The thing was simple enough: before leading others to the confessional, it was necessary that they themselves should show them the way.

Every effort made by the higher classes to benefit those below them, revives and sustains in the former the spirit of compassion, of benevolence, and of self-sacrifice—the best sentiments of the human heart. It imparts life to them; for to live is to feel, is to love.

is to be loved, and to cause love in others. To have sympathy with and fellow-feeling for the poor—that is to live; but to be wholly absorbed in business matters, in advancing one's own fortune, or in concocting intrigues—that is not to live; rather it is to become brutish and to go to ruin. Nothing is more immoral and contrary to nature than to be always taken up with self. Moreover, the course which we are recommending tends to draw the different classes closer together, to teach them to know and esteem each other, and to assuage mutual jealousies and antipathies. The people are fond of being thought of, of having interest manifested towards them. Under such treatment they readily yield, and are glad to be reconciled. They become even proud of the tokens of benevolence bestowed on them by some wealthy individual; it is a kind of safeguard to them against evil passions. They say to themselves:—"We are loved and esteemed: let us by honest and Christian conduct continue to deserve such consideration."

Further, it cannot be denied that there is a tendency in the spirit of the people to fancy themselves despised by the rich. Even suspicion on that point must be rendered impossible, for it may lead to serious evils. The people are implacable on the subject of contempt: they are even cruel, and they cannot pardon it, whatever else they may be ready to overlook. They forgive those who deceive and those who rob and over-work them; but they do not forgive those who

despise them. To be despised is to them the last indignity: and perhaps there is some reason in that popular instinct. It is surprising that our blessed Lord complained but once during His passion. . . . He suffered, He died, without a murmur; but when the affront of contempt was inflicted on Him, He complained, and uttered that speech which revealed a heart profoundly bruised:—"If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"

But when the people meet with benevolence and cordiality among the rich, jealousy and hate give way, and they may be heard to say:—"If all the rich were of that sort, they would be adored; we should be ready to die for them." Moreover, they are led thereby to have more faith in God and in the reality of a Providence.

Some few years ago there lived an artisan's wife who was notorious for her hatred towards society, towards the rich, and even towards God. She hated them with an implacable, a woman's hate. Her malignity was specially directed against the *rolls of silk* and *bundles of stuff*—so she designated the females of the upper classes—and she was known to be in the habit of saying to her children:—"I have brought you up for the democracy . . . to humble the rich and to re-establish equality; and if you do not become democrats I will disown you."

A priest commissioned a young marchioness, as

virtuous as she was accomplished, to attend to this poor creature. She began by listening with kindness to all her grievances and insults, and even allowed herself to be called a *coquine.* Nevertheless, by dint of patience, she soon succeeded in calming her embittered soul.

One day, the marchioness, who was about to absent herself for several weeks, went to bid farewell to her protégée. She took her affectionately by the hand, and then, moved thereto spontaneously by her kind heart, and doubtless by the grace of God also, cordially kissed her, saying, as she left :—"I shall soon see you again."

The poor woman was stunned with amazement, and moved even to tears, and forthwith went to the priest ; but instead of first saluting him, she began by exclaiming :—"Is it possible? You will not believe me ; nevertheless it is true. She kissed me! . . . Yes, the lady marchioness kissed a miserable creature like me. . . . Ah! I have frequently declared that there was no good God ; now I say there is, because that lady is one of His angels. I have said, too, that I would never confess ; now you may confess me as often as you please." Since that time she has been an exemplary Christian.

The day after, the priest wrote as follows to the excellent lady whom God had made the instrument of this good work :—"You may, indeed, consider yourself happy. . . . We priests are at great pains

to preach, and do not always succeed in converting our hearers; but you succeed with an embrace!"

Oh, if women only knew! Oh, if they would, what good they might do, what evil they might prevent! . . .

Moreover, the existence of real virtue in a woman of the world depends upon her coming out of self, and devoting herself assiduously to works of charity. . . . For, you may rest assured of this, that without self-denial on her part you will never be able to keep her in the right way. . . . Take the case of a light, worldly, and gay woman—and there are many such; you will never acquire any influence over her except through the medium of charity. She will make promises, but she will take care not to keep them: you can never rely on her being faithful to them. It will be vain for you to address her in the most conclusive speeches, to ply her with refined and smart essays on good breeding—in vain that you assail her foibles and waywardness with irony and sarcasm—in vain that you hold up before her the terrors of death, hell, and eternity. She will find loopholes by which to elude all that, and to deceive herself. It will not prevent her in the least from being vain and excessively addicted to pleasure, from baring her shoulders immoderately, and from going a-begging for idolatrous incense in fashionable circles. Before all, she must be made to feel, to love, to be loved, to devote herself. Charity filling her soul will

set fire to the house, and then everything else will be thrown out of the window.

Strive, therefore, to enlist all—women, men, and even children—in searching out the distressed, and in the moral improvement of the people. Make charity honourable; let there be benevolent enterprises in your locality in which all can take part, so that there may not be a man or woman who has not his or her poor, or who is not engaged somehow in works of charity.

This is the case already in several towns in France, where a person can scarcely decline being a member of some benevolent association without suffering a loss of respect. You must overcome all repugnances on this subject, more especially that of *amour propre*. There are those who will raise the following objection, which is by no means rare :—"How can I, a man in my position, a woman of my standing, busy myself about a set of beggarly people like these?" To such reply :—"And why not? In the great cities, men the most eminent by fortune, talent, and reputation, do it. . . . Even ladies who are fêted and sought after in the world—the young and beautiful, countesses, marchionesses, and princesses—even such do not disdain the task. There are women in Paris, possessing every thing that heart can desire, with a rental of from two hundred to three hundred thousand francs, who deprive themselves of legitimate pleasures to occupy themselves in making clothes for the poor, visiting the most

wretched hovels, and nursing the indigent sick." Tell them all this with gentleness and kindness ; make the grand ladies of certain small towns—such as the wives of lawyers, judges, advocates, merchants, commission agents, and viscounts—ashamed of themselves. It will tend to wean them from that spirit of contempt and sensualism, and that pride of shabby finery, which consists in thinking one's self superior to a rival because she has had the signal honour of finding a better dressmaker. Tell them that if they affect the fashions and usages of Paris, they would do well to imitate the charity, zeal, and devotion which are exercised there.

To cite but one instance, that of Donoso Cortès, whom we may now praise, for God has just called him to Himself. He disappeared every day from home at certain hours. No one knew where he went ; but it was afterwards discovered that it was the time of his visits to the poor. M. de Montalembert, who knew him well, tells us that he loved the poor passionately, but, withal, discreetly. In fact, in order to benefit the people, that is how they must be loved. Thereby alone can you hope to succeed in restoring them to the path of Gospel self-denial and self-sacrifice.

Be on your guard, moreover, against another excuse often urged by certain of the wealthier classes. They say :—"But the people distrust us ; it is quite enough for us to attempt to lead them in one way to make them determined to follow another."

The people distrust the wealthy classes! If it be so, whose fault is it? Is it all theirs? They do not know those classes; they seldom see them except at a distance, and from a lower standing. Their estimate of them is founded on slander; how, then, can they have confidence in them? . . . Their confidence must be won, it must be raised by dint of benevolence, charity, and self-devotion, and the task is by no means impracticable. What! the possessors of fortune, and talent, and a name, and yet unable to gain that confidence on the part of the people which a schoolmaster, a village lawyer, a tipstaff, a man without any intellectual or moral worth, is able to secure! Of what avail, then, is it to spend so many long years in study? What does a good education mean, and of what use is it? Surely a very false idea has been formed of education. It will soon be made to consist in knowing how to train a horse, or to turn a compliment, or in instilling vanity into brains which need no addition of that quality. Knowledge, talent, position, and birth are not bestowed on us for the benefit of self, but for the welfare of all; and it therefore behoves those who are endowed with a greater capacity—who possess more knowledge, more time, more influence, and more heart than others—to share their advantages with those who have less, or who have not the leisure to acquire them.

That the influence of which we are speaking may be secured is proved by the fact of its existence

throughout France. There are parts of the country where the rich man is king and father of his *commune;* which then resembles one great family. There, the tenant of the cottage exchanges smiles with the proprietor of the mansion, and the joys and sorrows of both are warmly reciprocated. No important step is taken by those who are below without knowing first what those above them think of it. Under such circumstances, how many evils are avoided, how many quarrels adjusted, how many animosities appeased! Oh, what a glorious mission! How sad to reflect that it is not carried out everywhere! Nevertheless, strive to make it understood by persuasion. Make frequent appeals to the hearts of the rich, to their love of humanity. Invoke them to aid us in stopping the misery at its source. Invoke their pity on the masses who toil and suffer beneath us; their pity for those poor children whose fathers devour their bread; pity on behalf of the aged who pine in cold and hunger; pity for the woman who spends her Sunday evenings in tears, expecting every moment to encounter the brutality of a husband who reels home with his reason and heart drowned in liquor. Appeal even to their sense of shame, and tell them that if it is right to protect animals, it is still more so to cherish human beings—that their words, coupled with a good example, would be all-powerful to remedy these miseries—that it is the rich and great of the earth who sow good or evil in the hearts of men, and that

if matters do not progress to their satisfaction, they should begin by taking the blame to themselves. . . . Your efforts will be appreciated by many. . . You will be blessed by all.

Such are the French people; such, it appears to us, is the way to do them good.

It is well to study books: it is indispensable; but it is not enough. We must also study the hearts, the minds, the manners of those with whom we have to deal, otherwise our knowledge will be like gold buried in the mountains of America. "The good shepherd knows his sheep, and is known of them." Is that saying always realized amongst ourselves?

There is one particular point, however, on which we must be thoroughly convinced, namely, that what sufficed in former times will not suffice now. A great revolution has taken place among the masses. A century ago, Christianity bore all away in its strong current. Passions broke loose, no doubt; but sooner or later all bowed before the Gospel. Nowadays, attempts are made to justify human weaknesses. Formerly, scarcely any other guidance was permitted but that of the Christian pulpit. Now, there are platforms everywhere, and within a century we have between fifteen and eighteen millions more who can read—from fifteen to eighteen millions of men who may easily be led astray.

It is a common saying that "France is very

sick." Then, I beseech you not to treat it as if it were in perfect health. Would you make an end of it?

"Christianity alone can save us," is another common remark. Very true; but it must be brought in contact with the masses, and if they do not come to us, we must go to them. . . . We have been unsuccessful in the ministry of the word; let us try the ministry of charity.

Is it not the aim of Christian eloquence to win over the hearts of men, and to dispose them towards that which is good? . . . Avail yourselves, then, of your position to carry out that object . . . . Be persuaded that the world is tired of fine speeches; it wants actions: and of that demand, who can complain? . . . To study and to argue is to act well; to act and to love is better still.

But the most formidable argument against Christianity is this:—"We admit that Christianity has rendered great benefits to mankind by endowing the world with admirable institutions; but its sap is exhausted; its ascendancy over the masses is lost." Let us prove that this is false, not by words merely, but by deeds: by self-denial and self-sacrifice. Those arguments are unanswerable.

But in order to remedy the evils which beset us, we must not rely on the systems of the learned or on human laws. Good heavens! if reasonings and codes of law sufficed to secure the peace and happiness of a

people, France ought to be the most prosperous country in the world.

Neither must we rely upon the power of the sword. It is easily used ; but, as De Maistre has said, to rely on force is like lying down on the sail of a windmill to obtain quiet sleep. Then, again, the adoption of force leads to the most terrible excesses. Those who invoke it know not what they do : they have never witnessed civil war or barricades, they have never seen French blood flow in the streets, they have never heard the roar of cannon or the crash of grape-shot. . . . May God preserve us from a recurrence of such experience! Rather by dint of persuasion, of devotion, and of love, let us strive to reconcile all hearts, and make France the foremost people in the world—the most Christian and divinely blessed nation. .

CHAPTER III.

THE ORDER OF A SERMON.

The Exordium—Divisions—Proofs—Are there many Unbelievers in France?—Manner of refuting Objections.

AFTER getting to know the people and to be known of them, to love them and to be loved by them in return, the next step is to lead them to the knowledge and love of God and His Gospel by means of oral teaching. . . . In carrying this out, use plain speech, and aim straight at your object, which is to expound the truth proposed to be treated in such a way as shall cause it to be listened to with interest. Let it be perceived at once what the subject is, and what you intend to say. Sketch out your truth in a few sententious words, clearly and emphatically enunciated.

Let there be none of those vague and halting considerations which give the speaker the air of a man who is blindfolded, and strikes at random,—none of those perplexing exordiums wherein every conceivable fancy is brought to bear upon a single idea, and which frequently elicit the remark:—"What is he driving at? what topic is he going to discuss?"

Let the subject-matter be vigorously stated at the outset, so that it may rivet the minds and engage the attention of the audience.

Generally speaking, at the commencement of a discourse, there is profound silence, and all eyes are fixed on the preacher. Avail yourself of that opportunity to arrest the imagination of your hearers, to attract their attention, which you should maintain throughout, and to withdraw their minds from the things of earth, and from themselves, in order that they may live your life for the space of half-an-hour.

Let your onset be bold and vigorous, that your audience may catch a glimpse of the strength of your position, your means of defence, and the triumph of the truth which you are about to handle. . . . "I prefer," says Montaigne, "those discourses which level the first charge against the strongest doubt. I look for good and solid reasons to come after."

This should be followed by a word of appeal to the heart, to restrain its evil promptings—something genial and earnest, calculated to open out the soul, and which, coupled with a simple and modest demeanour, shall at once bespeak the preacher as sincerely attached to his audience. If preaching on the duty of charity towards the poor, you might say: —"I come before you on the present occasion to plead a cause which will secure me against all adverse criticism, for I know your charity. I have not to

address you to-day in language of censure or rebuke, but in words of encouragement and blessing."

If a severe truth is to be urged on the congregation, it might be introduced thus:—"You will permit me to declare the truth unto you; for you love the truth. The people have never been hostile to it. . . . You yourselves would not be satisfied with half truths; you desire something better. Therefore I shall deem it my duty to tell you the whole truth with the freedom of an apostle, but at the same time, with all Christian charity."

In a word, you should exhibit that gentle admixture of power and benignity which so well befits him who speaks in the name of the Most High; exciting the love of your hearers as with the influence of a mother. Or, following therein the example of Saint Paul, being like one who serves, and not like one who rules; condescending towards all; striving to withdraw them from the sorrows and passions of life, that you may lead them to the truth, to virtue, and to heaven. . . .

On great occasions it is usual to recite the *Ave Maria* before the sermon. It is a venerable and edifying practice which ought to be followed; but forbear invoking the Holy Spirit or the blessed Virgin unless you do it devoutly and sincerely. It is frequently otherwise: one appeals to heaven, and fixes his eyes on the earth; another, instead of the posture of prayer, assumes the attitude of menace, and looks very much like a man who demands your money or your life.

There should be order in the sermon, and the ideas should be linked together, and should mutually support each other. But it should not be laid down as an invariable rule always to follow those categorical divisions which necessarily cut up a truth into two or three parts, these to be cut up again into two or three sections of truth, giving the speaker the air of a man who is amusing himself with pulling a machine to pieces, and then putting it together again. The Fathers did not ordinarily follow that course. Indeed, all discourses cannot be so subdivided; for not every subject will bear it without losing much of its interest. . . . Most sermons seem to be modelled on the same pattern, so much so, that the hearer is disposed at the very outset to remark:—"I have heard that already twenty times over, set forth just in the same way. What use is there in my listening to it again?" This is one drawback, in addition to the consideration that it is not prudent to take the audience into your confidence as to the conclusion to which you intend to lead them. . . . Or another listener will say:—"Alas! we are still at the second subdivision of the first part. What a long sermon it will be!" He is seized with *ennui*, and then farewell to all feeling of interest in the Divine word, and to all hope of any benefit to be derived from it.

It is preferable to have a range of ideas known to yourself alone, with intervening pauses. In that way you will carry the hearers along with you. They will

listen, will be moved, will forget how time passes, and at the conclusion will not feel tired with having followed you. It appears that the mania for sub-dividing everything is a complaint of long standing. La Bruyère has passed his judgment upon it; which, apart from exaggeration—the inseparable companion of criticism—is not inapplicable at the present day.

Speaking of preachers he says:—"They hold three things to be of indispensable and geometrical necessity, and to deserve your admiring attention. They will prove a certain proposition in the first part of their discourse, another in the second part, and another in the third. Thus, you are to be convinced, first, of a certain truth—that is their first point; then of a third truth—which is their third point; so that the first reflection is to instruct you on one of the most fundamental principles of religion; the second, on another not less so; and the third, on a third and last principle, the most important of all, but which, nevertheless, must be postponed for lack of time to another occasion. Finally, in order to resume and sum up these divisions, and to form a plan. . . . 'What!' you are ready to exclaim, 'more yet! And are these merely the preliminaries to a discourse of forty-five minutes' duration which is still to follow! Why, the more they attempt to digest and throw light upon the subject, the more they confuse me!' I readily believe you, for it is the most natural effect of that heap of ideas, which always turns upon one and the

same thought, with which they pitilessly burden the memory of their hearers. It would seem, to witness their obstinate adherence to this practice, as if the grace of conversion was attached to these preposterous divisions. I heartily wish that they would pause in their impetuous course to take breath, and give a little breathing-time to others. Vain discourses! Words thrown away! The time of homilies exists no longer; our Basils and Chrysostoms will fail to reclaim them; people will pass over into other dioceses to be beyond the reach of their voice and familiar instructions; for men in general like set phrases and finely turned periods, admire what they don't understand, consider themselves edified thereby, and rest satisfied with deciding between the first and second points of a discourse, or between the last sermon and that which preceded it."

Division must not be sought for; it must present itself, and spring out of the subject which you are about to discuss, or the object which you have in view. For instance, you intend to treat on deference to man's opinion. Establish these two points:—1st. That there is no disgrace attached to the practice of religion; and 2nd. That even if there were, in the estimation of some men, it is our bounden duty to brave it.

When a dogma of the faith is to be treated either before the people or others, never propound the truth in a hypothetical form, which is fraught with danger.

Thus, do not say :—"Does the soul die with the body, or does it pass to another life?" . . . "Is Jesus Christ a mere man; or is he the Son of God?" Always use the affirmative form :—"The soul does not die with the body; the soul will live for ever." . . . "Jesus Christ is the Son of God; he is God Himself." Otherwise, you will seem to question those verities, and may give rise to doubts. Such was the result in the case of an artisan, who remarked, after listening to a sermon :—"For my part, I was quite sure that there was another life; but I learn from what the preacher has stated to-day, that there is something to be said against as well as in favour of the doctrine."

The people like a strong, self-reliant, and fearless affirmative, declared boldly and sincerely in the name of God, which admits of no *buts*, or *ifs*, but which descends from on high, claiming the ready assent of all without distinction.

Discussion is not the way to teach Christianity. It must be fully understood that the truth of the Gospel is not the conclusion of an argument; that it depends neither on the talent of the preacher, nor yet on the acceptance of the hearer; that all such accidents do not affect it in any way. Christianity must be expounded just as it is; but in a noble and energetic manner, such as shall cause it to be readily understood and loved in spite of all opposition.

Nevertheless, in condescension to human infirmity, you may occasionally justify God, as the Divine word

says, by pointing out the fitness of a Catholic truth; but this must be by the way only. Resume quickly the high standing of a man who speaks in the name of God—*tanquam potestatem habens*—and who is himself controlled by a truth which he cannot modify in the least degree. Call in frequently the aid of faith; prove, without stating that you are going to prove; and, in order the better to combat men's errors, confront human authority with the authority of God.

Men will raise such objections as these:—"But the Gospel itself declares. . . . Those great men who are called the Fathers on account of their piety and genius have said . . . The Catholic Church, armed with its infallible authority, says . . . God Himself has declared . . . And as against these witnesses what is the word of a mere man to me? Moreover, I will not submit; I will not bow down to human authority. Am not I a man as well as he? Am I not endowed with reason? He affirms, I deny; he denies, I affirm; my word is as good as his, even were he what is called a man of genius. Granted that genius commands respect—and I respect it when it yields to what is superior to it—but, as compared with the law of God, what is a man of genius? A poor pigmy, who labours and drudges for forty years to acquire some traces of a superior mind; who, more frequently possesses the *amour propre* of a silly woman; and who, while pretending to govern the world from his study, allows himself to be led by his own female domestic. For

my part, I require something better than that; a greater, a higher authority, and one much more self-reliant."

You will best restrain and meet these objections by having God always at your side. Entrench yourself behind the Divine authority; efface the man and hold up God; impose silence on the earth and let Him speak, but with power and loving-kindness.

Unhappily, we have not maintained this high standing. The Divine word has been brought down too much to a human level; it has been made too much to reflect man's image. The incessant attacks of the enemies of religion, and, it may be, our own scholastic studies also, have inspired us with a combative and querulous humour. Christianity is now discussed, proved, philosophically demonstrated. You constantly meet men who are going to *prove* this to you, then to *prove* that, and then again to *prove* something else. In God's name, don't repeat this so often, but do it a little better.

These attempts to prove certain propositions generally result in obscuring and confounding them. A preacher states a truth; you understand and enjoy it. He demonstrates it; and you understand it less, and perchance begin to doubt it.

Some years ago especially, we were seized with the malady of dogmatic conferences. Every one wished to hold conferences to prove the *reasonableness* of Christianity. The epidemic has abated, but we are

not wholly free from it. . . . That there should still be one or two of these conference-men in certain large towns is all well enough; yet even that is to be regretted, for the genus is an offshoot of the misfortune of the age, and is by no means apostolic. In order to treat Christianity in that way, extraordinary talent is required, together with a thorough knowledge of the dogmas of our religion, a knowledge equally profound of the human heart, of philosophical systems and errors, and a mathematical precision of language.

We may rest assured that the control over antagonisms and passions, so as to preclude doubt or suspicion from creeping into the mind, must always proceed from an elevated standing, and that men possessing the necessary qualifications, or even some of them in a high degree, are extremely rare.

This consideration has been sadly overlooked. Very soon we shall have every one attempting to philosophize Christianity. There are scarcely any, down to the youngest priest, who does not take up the most difficult dogmas, and who does not seek to do battle with those who are styled "unbelievers"—that is the current word nowadays, because, as it would seem, the old term (infidel) has been worn out by long usage, and, therefore, it has been thought necessary to create a new one.

All this is very deplorable. Until quite lately there was hardly a discourse, addressed even to the people exclusively, which did not contain passages intended

for unbelievers, or tirades against unbelievers, or apostrophes to unbelievers. The believers who were present were neglected for the sake of the unbelievers who were absent.

It is not rare, indeed, to meet with men who call themselves unbelievers, who assert it, and who write themselves such ; but will you find men who are seriously unbelievers, and who do not falter in their negations ? A pious priest, who was frequently called upon to attend the sick in the higher classes of society in Paris, was once asked whether he often met with men who had ceased to believe. He replied, good-naturedly :—" Pray, don't allude to the subject. . . . Though I have been long accustomed to minister to great sinners, I have never yet had the good fortune to lay my hand on one who was even a little unbelieving. As regards the faith, men in general are better than their words or their writing either."

As has been well remarked :—" The man who, even in all sincerity, says : " I don't believe,' often deceives himself. There is in the depths of his heart a root of faith which never dies."

Real unbelief cannot prevail in France. There is too much good sense, too much rectitude in the French mind, and too much moral beauty in the Gospel, to render absolute unbelief possible.

These pretensions to unbelief are generally based on a little ignorance combined with a large amount of feeble-mindedness ; so that when one tells you that he

does not, that he cannot believe, you should understand him to mean that he is weak and timid. Let us be on our guard against taking such men at their word, for we should thereby show how little knowledge we possess of the human heart. A priest who was called in to attend a person who had spoken and written much against religion, put this question to him:—"When you wrote were you quite sure of your own unbelief?" The other replied,—"Alas! Monsieur l'Abbé. . . ." in a deprecating tone, which seemed clearly to imply: —"How young you are, and how little you know of the human heart!"

No; the question between the world and ourselves is not whether the miracles and mysteries of Christianity are believed, but whether the morality of the Gospel is practised. That is the real question at issue. So true is this, that scholars and honest men will not hesitate to say frankly:—"The matter is not one of argument; only retrench from your religion several small commandments of God and the Church, which we need not specify, and then we will be on your side."

That is the secret of unbelief. It is not faith that is wanting, but the courage to do what is right.

How, then, are we to get rid of those preachers who are always taken up with unbelievers? How delivered from those endless sermons addressed to unbelievers? They do us much harm and very little good. The whole thing, besides being ill-judged, is a mistake. By incessantly speaking to men about

unbelief, we may end in making them unbelievers; just as we may make a dolt of a man by dint of telling him that he has no sense. Besides, what a blow it is to Christianity to give the people to understand that a notable portion of a great nation has seriously contested its Divine origin! Is not this to suggest the temptation that they too should become unbelievers, since, by so doing, they would be in so numerous and goodly a company? Instead of such a course, begin by telling your audience—but in the accents of profound conviction—that there is not one unbeliever among them; that they all have faith; that they believe as you do; that they are better than they judge themselves to be; that not every one who wishes it can become an unbeliever; that Jesus Christ is too eminent in history and in the world to be regarded, in earnest, as a mere man: . . . tell them this, and you will do them good, and, besides, you will be telling the truth.

They all believe, but their faith is imperfect, wounded. So true is this, that Voltaire himself, as all the world knows, could not rid himself entirely of his faith, all Voltaire that he was. . . . What! Voltaire, with all his wit, and, if you will, his genius,—Voltaire, with his demon pride, his satanic hatred of Christ, his half century of blasphemies,—Voltaire, the head of the most redoubtable cohort of enemies that Christianity ever had,—even he could not wholly divest himself of his belief; and yet it is pretended that our pigmies of the nineteenth century, with their limited

knowledge and petty malice, are able to stifle their faith when that giant of impiety was unable to strangle his in his eagle's clutch! . . .

Only a little reflection is needed to convince ourselves on this point. For what is unbelief? It is the conviction that Christianity is false. Now, how can such a conviction be arrived at against eighteen centuries of genius and virtue, against the authority of the Gospel, against Christ Himself? How can any man reasonably attain the position of being able to confront those eminent men and facts, and say:—"I am quite sure that you have deceived the world . . . you have lied?" It is impossible. It may be said and written in a moment of passion; but such assurance is not, cannot be attained.

We shall, therefore, be acting truly as well as wisely in not descanting so much about unbelievers. For, after all, of what use is it? For the most part, these alleged unbelievers are not present to listen to you. Neither is that the worst feature in the case. These kinds of sermons are by no means calculated to convert them. Generally speaking, they show too little regard for the *amour propre* of such characters; who, as is well known, do not pique themselves on their humility. If we would benefit them we must pass quickly from the mind to the heart: that is their weak point. We must not keep ourselves so much on the defensive, but carry the war into the enemy's country. Our tactics should be to do good

abundantly to all men that we may save all, and then there will be no doubt about their believing in the divinity of Christianity.

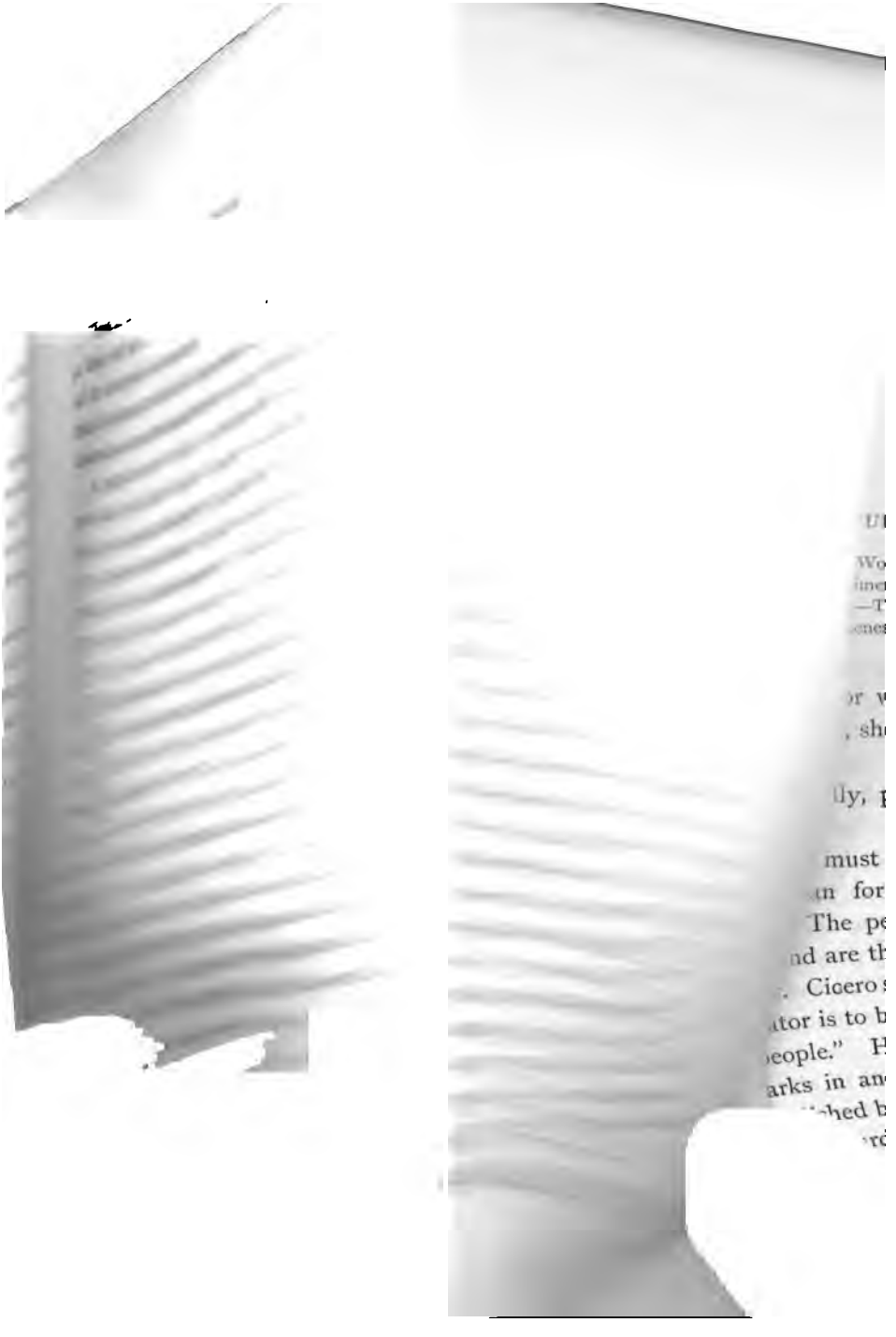
All the parts of a sermon need not be equally good and powerful. Two or three more elaborate and striking passages will suffice to ensure success; but those passages should be such as effectually to overthrow prejudices and errors, and should be conclusive against all gainsayers.

There should also be intervals to break monotony —that stumbling-block of many sermons; to give the mind rest; to allow time for the hearts of the audience to be penetrated by what has been said; to introduce familiar topics which do the soul so much good; to soften the asperities of any great emotion; to bind up the wounded; in a word, intervals for the preacher to become the father after having represented the King, to attract the hearts after having gained the minds of his hearers.

It is a mistake to aim at making every part of a sermon equally powerful and equally prominent. It is an attempt against Nature. Moreover, we should not aspire to adduce every available proof in support of a particular truth. One or two will suffice, and the strongest is not always the most convincing to your audience. Select those likely to produce the greatest impression, and forbear when that end is attained. The victory is yours, retain it, and do not expose yourself to a reverse.

There are men who do not think they have proved a thing until they have brought together, pell-mell, all the known proofs in the world. The consequence is that, after listening to one of their sermons, the question discussed appears more confused to you than ever.

As regards objections to be refuted, you should never adduce any but such as are current in the locality where you are speaking; and it is dangerous to give them a too salient form, for you may thereby wound the faith of your audience. But the objection once stated, refute it at once in a few sharp and decisive words. Let your reply be in language as prompt, striking, and decisive as that of the objection. Avoid all circumlocution and hesitation in meeting it. Show it no pity, but let it expire forthwith in the presence of your audience. Let every word tell like the cut or thrust of a sword, or, at least, like the stroke of a mace which shall effectually silence the objection. You may then justify, easily, the blows which you have dealt: but strike first and explain afterwards; otherwise, never attempt to place an objection before the people. If, as is too often done, you begin by saying:—"Before refuting this objection, two principles must first be laid down," or, "three reflections must be made," the minds of your hearers will go a wool-gathering; they will not listen to your reflections; they will retain nothing of your discourse beyond the objection; you will have lost your time, and may have done harm into the bargain.



In sermons to the people, the peroration should be energetic, captivating, fervent; not a fervour of the head or throat, but of the soul, accompanying something to enlighten the minds of the hearers, to gain the assent of their hearts, to subdue their passions, and to electrify their spirits.

Let us be on our guard against those vapid perorations which are nothing more than the ending of a discourse which we are at a loss how otherwise to wind up. The audience must not be dismissed with a wrong impression; therefore be more affectionate at the conclusion, the more severe the truths have been which you have enunciated. In a word, the peroration should be sympathetic and vibrating. It should comprise all the power, all the marrow, and all the energy of the sermon. It should contain some of those keen thoughts, some of those proverbial phrases, which recur to the mind again and again like the strains of a familiar song which we sing involuntarily, —or a single thought, which when once entertained leads one to say:—"Were I to live a hundred years, I shall never forget it."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SERMON SHOULD BE POPULAR.

What constitutes true Popularity?—Popularity in Words, in Thought, in Sentiment—One of the most popular Sentiments in France is Patriotism—Means to utilize that Sentiment—The Relationship between Popularity and Genius — Demosthenes — Saint John Chrysostom—Daniel O'Connell.

THE language of the Christian orator whose object is to make religion known and loved, should possess the following characteristics:—

It should be, 1st, popular; 2ndly, plain; 3rdly, short.

All eloquence to be effectual must be popular. An orator is essentially the man for all, and is specially made for the people. The people are the best judges of true eloquence, and are themselves the best soil to be cultivated thereby. Cicero says that "the most infallible token of an orator is to be esteemed as such in the opinion of the people." He was so persuaded of this that he remarks in another place:—"I wish my eloquence to be relished by the people."

This is still more true as regards the Christian

orator. He appeals to all: to the little, to the poor and the ignorant as well as to the great, the wealthy, and the learned, and his speech should be understood and enjoyed by all. He is not free to deprive any one of the truth. All men are people before the Gospel, and that Gospel speaks in unison with the souls of all. It stoops to raise, to comfort, and to enlighten all. Hence the truly popular preacher proclaims himself at the outset as no ordinary orator, but one about to be powerful, and to rise into a giant, before whom even the most learned will be obliged to bow, because his soul is linked with the Divine word, and with the hearts of the people.

This popularity of Christian discourses has become rare, more especially in our towns. Instead of being satisfied with the life, the sap of that Gospel which has moved the world, preachers have deemed themselves obliged to call in the aid of philosophy, metaphysics, and distorted phraseology and rhetoric. The exception has been taken for the rule. The Divine word has been bound, imprisoned in a terminology, which many do not understand. The preacher speaks, but the man remains impassible and cold. Painful reflection! The word of God passes by and says nothing to the mind, the soul, or even to the ears of the audience.

But I hasten to observe that the popularity of a sermon does not consist in using common, trivial, or vulgar language. The people do not like such a style,

and regard it as derogatory to their intelligence and dignity. They have much more tact than is generally supposed. They know perfectly well what befits each, and have an exquisite sense of propriety. The people wish their preacher to speak better than they do, and appreciate dignified language. Hence, whenever they have to name anything mean before you, they are careful to preface it with the proverbial apology: "saving your respect." In fine, the object of preaching being to elevate the people, the language adopted should be superior to theirs. The style of speaking has an important bearing on the morals of life.

We may, however, occasionally borrow some of their most striking and picturesque, and even some of their quaint expressions, put them into a good framing, and make them the starting-point for a felicitous sally or thought. They have then a powerfull effect. The people perceive thereby that you are acquainted with them, that you must have visited among them, that you know their life, their toil, their sorrows, and even their foibles, and they will open their hearts to you at once. They feel themselves to be on familiar ground, where they find, as it were, an old friend. There is a strange instinct among the people which leads them to reason thus:—"That man knows us, therefore he loves us;" whereupon they readily give you their confidence.

Then, again, it is not very difficult to maintain a

style of speaking at once dignified and popular. Look at the lady of fashion dealing with the petty tradesman, or even with a fish-woman—a character by no means celebrated for choice or polite expressions. The price of the article treated for is discussed, the bargain is struck, both parties come to a satisfactory understanding, and the language of the woman of the world has been sober throughout, and perfectly becoming. . . .

But popular speech consists not so much in the expressions used as in the thoughts and sentiments conveyed thereby. We have already remarked that the people have good sense, ready wit, and above all a heart. . . . We must lay hold of those points in them to effect an entry into their minds as well as their hearts, thereby preparing the way for religion to follow.

The people have a certain aggregate of ideas and thoughts, and their own way of apprehending and appreciating things. All this should be studied, for it constitutes the best holdfast of humanity. We should make ourselves of the people, as it were, in their mode of thought, joining thereto superior knowledge; study those ideas which they do not adequately estimate, put them into expressive and proverbial language such as they relish, and then engraft religious thought into their thoughts in order to elucidate and elevate them.

But the people possess, above all, an inexpres-

sible richness of sentiment, together with admirable instincts. These must be laid hold of, cultivated, and profoundly stirred, and then Christianity should be brought in and fused, so to speak, with those good instincts and noble sentiments. Dive down to the bottom of the souls of the people . . . touch the best chords of their hearts . . . be inspired with their aspirations . . . be animated with their passions; I had almost said be agitated with their anger. Possess yourself of what is best in them, and return it to them in vivid expressions and glowing effusions of the soul, that they may think, feel, will, as you do; that their thought may seem to have anticipated yours, while, at the same time, you exercise sway over them. Then your sermon will be the outward expression of the best sentiments of the human heart, ennobled by the Divine word. Such, we take it, is true popularity; such also is the real power of Christian eloquence.

In this way you may lead men onward to the highest speculations, and raise them even to heroism. You may then use the language of scholars, provided that you continue to be of the people in heart.

One noble and powerful sentiment which should be cultivated—a sentiment which may be made to call forth the sublimest aspirations and the most heroic transports—is patriotism. The people love France, they love the glory of France, they love all that concerns France. If, then, you wish to interest

them, to induce them to listen to you, to stir them up, to enlarge their hearts, speak well of France to them; dilate to them of their earthly country, and then you will find it much easier to raise them to that country which is in heaven.

An admirable example of this was afforded by Monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris, during his visitations, and he produced one of those magic effects which seem hardly to belong to our times.

The venerable prelate visited a school of adults, consisting of about four hundred youths, all in the flower of their age and the heyday of their passions. On taking his seat, the whole assembly intoned a harmonious and popular hymn, full of patriotic sentiments. The archbishop made this the starting-point of his lecture, and soon there was such a thunder of applause that the floor of the hall shook, to say nothing of the ears of the spectators. The speaker himself must have been stunned, but he resumed with animation :—

"Do you know, my children, why this magic word 'country' electrifies your hearts? It is because one's native country is the sacred home of man, of his duties and his privileges. It is his life, his cradle, his tomb; it is everything to him after heaven, from whence he comes, and whither he must return; and which is on that account the glorious country, the kingdom of all righteousness, the fruition of all privileges, the communion of all souls, of all happiness, of

all good. Chaunt, therefore, your earthly country, but be not forgetful of that country which is beyond the skies.

"Yes, sing it, and love it well. It has need of all your filial love and useful prowess. It has bled much; it still suffers. Respect it, comfort it, for it is your mother. You are indebted to it for birth, instruction, employment, and a livelihood. It behoves you to show yourselves worthy of these benefits, to merit them, to win them, and to preserve them. Young citizens, be men! Young men, be Christians!

"I recognize in your ardour the descendants of those warriors who, on the approach of the enemy, gained the frontier at a bound, and as one man. They were workmen when they left; workmen less fortunate and educated than you are. They returned, as you know, conquering heroes, or they fell covered with glory.

"Were the country again menaced, and an appeal made to your courage, I should have no misgivings; for, hardly should I have blessed the tricoloured standard over your heads, than it would take the eagle's flight and echo a reply by a brilliant victory, either from the summits of the Alps or from the borders of the Rhine."

We must renounce all attempt to describe the sensation which this discourse elicited, and which it at the same time restrained, that the speaker might not be interrupted. It broke out at last; the hurricane

burst through all bounds, and then suddenly subsided, as if in remorse at its own violence. This intelligent silence seeming to say: "Go on," the archbishop proceeded:—

"I doubt not that you would easily triumph over the enemy: but would you overcome yourselves also? would you subdue your passions, calm your impetuosity, be Christians, be virtuous?" *

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed these noble youths. Their hearts were touched, and they were ready for any sacrifice. The prelate then rapidly set forth the virtues which they ought to practise, the temptations which they should avoid, the vices they should subdue, and the passions which they should curb. Thereupon, the explosion of enthusiasm was redoubled, showing that these brave youths were not irretrievably wedded to their errors and foibles; for, though in reality undergoing a partial defeat, they applauded as if they had been the conquerors.

We repeat it: one of the best means to popularize religion among the people is to speak always in favourable terms of their native country.

There can be no doubt that deplorable excesses in the history of the last seventy years have wounded the hearts of the clergy, and imparted a savour of bitterness and sarcasm to our language respecting France. But it is wrong: one should always love one's country and one's times, though it may be a duty to combat

* *Visites Pastorales*, p. 136.

their prejudices and their errors. On this subject I commend the words of one of our own statesmen, endeared both to religion and to his country :*—

"Do not misunderstand what I am about to say; do not imagine that I wish to unduly criticize the era in which we live. No; my country and my cotemporaries will find in me rather an impassioned advocate than a prejudiced detractor. I love my country and my time, for I cannot separate the one from the other. I believe that one cannot be loved without the other. He who does not acquiesce in the age in which he lives, its responsibilities and its dangers, does not wholly love his country: does not love his country except in times which either exist no longer, or in those which have not yet come. To do this, is to discourage, to lessen the power which we should hold at its service. The age in which each of us lives is simply the frame wherein God sets our duties; the career which He opens to and imposes upon our faculties. To study one's age is to search out what God desires and demands of us."

Then, again, we are bound to be just. If France has done wrong, how much good has she not done; how much is she not still doing every day! The words *Gesta Dei per Francos* have not ceased to be true as regards ourselves. Is not the blessed institution of the *Propagation of the Faith* the work of France? Is not, also, the *Archiconfrérie* for the

* M. de Falloux.

return of sinners to the paternal home, the work of France? Is not the Society of *Saint Vincent de Paul* likewise the work of France? That society numbers eight hundred confraternities throughout the world, and of these, five hundred are claimed by France. And wherever any good work is to be wrought for the Church, is it not accomplished by the words, the money, the prayers, and even by the sword of France? Surely, the citizen of such a country, the child of such a fatherland, has a right to speak well of his mother; more especially when the object is to lead souls to virtue. Re-awaken, then, the old French and Christian enthusiasm, filling all hearts with the sacred emotions of earthly patriotism, and with holy love for that better home which is eternal in the heavens.

Such is true popularity; such the power of speech. One is strong when he has on his side the reason and will of the multitude; when he has sympathy with humanity, and possesses the hearts of the masses. Let others say what they please: the many possess more mind than one person, whoever he may be; and popular speech has more weight than the speculations or fancies of a man of science, or even a man of genius.

Further, there is a sort of relationship between popularity and genius, so that one cannot exist without the other. For, what is a man of genius? He is one who has learnt to seize the thoughts, the aspirations, the wants of his own times, and has pro-

foundly traced them in brilliant, energetic, sympathetic pages; a man who astonishes and revivifies the age in which he lives, by telling it aright what it is, what it thinks, what it wants, and what it suffers. Moreover, as has been remarked long ago, the finest conceptions of genius are always grasped by the people.

On the other hand, the most sublime pages are always popular. I shall cite but one example, which is familiar to all. . . . The prophet Isaiah is describing the fall of the King of Babylon :—

"How hath the oppressor ceased! . . . The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet; yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying :—Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee: Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. All the kings of the nations. . . . lie in glory. . . . but thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . . For thou hast said in thine heart, I

will ascend unto heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will also sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. . . . I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying:—Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms, that made the world as a wilderness? . . . Thou hast destroyed thy land and slain thy people. The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers, that they do not rise nor possess the land."—(*Isaiah* xiv. 4-21.)

As might be expected, all great orators have been popular; for one cannot be truly an orator by one's own power or by dint of study; there must be, besides, a multitude to inspire you, and to stimulate you by their criticism and opposition.

Demosthenes, the greatest orator of ancient times, was pre-eminently a popular orator, and that popularity was the chief element of his glory. The people of Athens were all for him, for he loved them and knew them thoroughly: knew their frivolity, their vanity, their generosity, and their happy impulses. He invoked all that was great and good in the heart of man; not by vain declamations, but by energetic appeals to sentiments which one would blush not to possess. He drew his inspirations from the noblest patriotism, and his politics — a rare exception —

had their source in the deepest affections of his heart.

Hence it was that the people were so much attached to Demosthenes, and that he, on his part, could place such unbounded confidence in them.

Æschines had complained that Demosthenes had reproached him with being the host of Alexander. He answered him in these terms:—"I reproach you with being the host of Alexander! I reproach you with Alexander's friendship! How could you attain it? By what means? No, I cannot call you either the friend of Philip or the host of Alexander; I am not so foolish. Are reapers and hirelings called the hosts of those who pay them? He is nothing, nothing of the kind. First, a mercenary of Philip, he is now the mercenary of Alexander; that is what I and all our hearers call you. If you doubt it, ask them . . . or, rather, I will do it for you. Men of Athens, what, then, is your opinion? Is Æschines the host, or the mercenary of Alexander? . . . Do you hear their reply?"

So likewise Saint John Chrysostom, who was, perhaps, the most popular of orators. We do not find that he amused himself with vain speculations. He did not wander far and wide to hunt up topics whereon to address his hearers, for they themselves supplied all that he wanted. He found ample materials for his purpose in the depths of their minds and hearts, and under his masterly treatment

the simplest things acquired an accent of eloquence which gratified and moved his audience, which the people understood and the learned admired.

Surrounded by his congregation, he seems like a father in the midst of his family. He converses, he questions, he even consults, and he always loves.

It was the custom in his time for the audience to applaud the preacher during the sermon. They did not spare him that manifestation, and these are the terms in which he complains of it:—

"Believe me—the more so because I would not say it were it not true—that when you applaud my discourses, I am seized with a certain infirmity, and feel quite contented and happy. . . . But, on returning home, I reflect that all fruit of my speaking is lost through these applauses and commendations; and I say to myself: Of what avail is my labour if my hearers do not profit thereby? I have even thought of making a rule positively to forbid all applause, that you may listen to me in silence, with proper decorum and reserve. . . . I pray and conjure you to suffer me to establish such a rule forthwith. . . . Let us now order that no hearer shall make any noise while the preacher is speaking; and that if any one wishes to admire, let it be by keeping silence. (Applause.) Why do you still applaud me, even while I am making a law to prohibit the abuse? Though you will not suffer me to speak to you on the subject, nevertheless, let us enact

the law, for it will be to our advantage. . . . However, I do not wish to be too rigorous, for fear of appearing uncivil in your estimation; so that if you find so much gratification in applauding, I shall not hinder it; but I will suggest to you a much superior motive for eliciting still greater applause on your part, namely, that you carry away with you what you hear, and practise it."

When condemned to his first exile, the people flocked round their pastor, determined to proceed to extremities rather than let him depart. He then addressed them the following touching farewell:—

"A violent tempest surrounds me on all sides; but I fear nothing, because I stand on an immoveable rock. The fury of the waves cannot sink the vessel of Jesus Christ. Death cannot terrify me; it would rather be a gain to me. Do I fear exile? All the earth is the Lord's. Do I fear the loss of goods? Naked I was born into the world, and naked I shall return. I despise the scorn and the flattery of the world. I have no desire to live but for your welfare."

The people remained with him eight days to defend him, and the holy pastor, in order to prevent an insurrection, escaped by a secret door, and delivered himself up to his enemies. The Empress Eudoxia, however, was soon obliged to recall him. "We shall lose the empire," said she, "unless John is recalled."

Then, again, O'Connell, that orator who acquired so wide an influence, how popular he was! But I shall let M. de Cormenin describe him :—

"Look at O'Connell with his people—for they are truly his people. He lives of their life, he smiles with their joys, he bleeds with their wounds, he groans with their pains. He transports them at his will from fear to hope, from slavery to liberty, from the fact to the right, from the right to duty, from supplication to invective, and from anger to mercy and pity. He directs the people to kneel on the ground and pray, and they all kneel and pray; to raise their faces to the skies, and they raise them; to curse their tyrants, and they curse them; to sing hymns to liberty, and they sing them; to bare their heads and swear on the holy Gospels, and they uncover, raise the hand, and swear; to sign petitions for the reform of abuses, to unite their forces, to pardon their enemies, and they sign, they forget, they embrace, they forgive.

"That which makes him incomparable among all the orators of this or any other country, is that, without any premeditation, and by impulse alone, by the sole force of his powerful and triumphant nature, he enters wholly into his subject, and appears to be more possessed by it than of himself. His heart overflows; it goes by bounds, by transports, bringing into play all its pulsations. Like a high-bred charger, suddenly pulled back on its nervous and quivering haunches,

even so can O'Connell arrest himself in the unbridled course of his harangues, turn short and resume them—such versatility, spring, and vigour is there in his eloquence. You imagine at first that he is staggering, and about to succumb under the weight of the divinity which inwardly agitates him; but he rises again with a halo on his brow, an eye full of flame, and his voice, unlike that of a mortal, begins to resound in the air, and to fill all space.

"He is lyrical as a poet, and familiar even to playfulness. He draws his audience to him, and then transfers them to the floor of the theatre; or descends himself and mixes with the spectators. He never allows the stage to be without speech or action for a single moment. He distributes the parts to each. He himself sits as judge: he arraigns and he condemns; the people ratify, upraise the hand, and seem to believe that they are joining in a verdict. Sometimes O'Connell adapts the interior drama of a family to the external drama of political affairs. He calls up his aged father, his ancestors and the ancestors of the people . . . . He disposes and extemporises narratives, monologues, dialogues, *propœia*, interludes, and peripatetics. Knowing that the Irish are both light-hearted and melancholy, that they are fond of metaphor, flourish, and sarcasm, he stifles laughter with tears, the grandiose by the grotesque. He attacks the House of Lords, and, chasing them from their aristocratic lairs, tracks them one by one

like wild beasts. He is always popular, be his speech grave, sublime, or jocular :—

"'Ireland! oh, how that name alone sticks in the Saxon throat. My friends, my heart and my mind are known to you, and I wish you to understand this, that I have power enough to prevent either Peel or Wellington from treading on the liberties of Ireland. I have only to say this to them : We will intrench ourselves behind the law and the constitution ; but do not attempt to put our patience to the test beyond bounds, for if there is danger in exasperating cowards, there is a thousand times more danger in exasperating those who are not.' (Applause). 'I told you at the outset that I did not feel disposed to speak : this is not a speech, it is history which I am making at this moment. The people have placed unlimited confidence in me. I might, perhaps, say with affected modesty that I do not deserve it. I will be more frank. I believe that I do deserve it.' (Applause : yes! yes!) 'Mine is a strange fortune. I believe I am the only man, living or dead, who has enjoyed uninterrupted confidence and popularity for forty years.'

"*A Voice.*—'May you enjoy them twice as long!'

"*O'C.*—'That is impossible. Long before then, I shall be summoned before my Maker to give an account of all the actions of my public and private life.

"*A Voice.*—'You have always done your duty!'

"*O'C.*—'May such be the judgment of the Most High!' (Applause.) 'Kindly spare me these interruptions.' (Laughter.) 'Our first duty is to obey the law. Don't think that in giving you this advice I intend that you should submit to unlawful outrage. After all, violence is not what I fear—I who am alone in the world.' (Cries of no, no, you are not alone!) 'Pardon me, my friends, I am alone; for she for whom I might have entertained fears, but whose courage would certainly never have failed, has been taken from my affections.' (O'Connell pronounced these last words with deep emotion, in which the whole assembly seemed to participate. Several ladies present raised their handkerchiefs to their eyes.)

"'Were they to put a gag in my mouth or handcuffs on my wrists, I would still point out the safest and wisest course for you to follow. I trust there will be no conflict: let us close our ranks, shoulder to shoulder, let us rally round the constitution, that Ireland may not be delivered over to her enemies by the folly, the passions, or the treachery of her children.' (Applause.)"

He knows how to excite the laughter of his audience, and to enliven them with racy comparisons, which are sometimes, however, of a kind unsuited to Christian discourses.

"There was formerly a fool in Kerry—a rare thing there. This fool having discovered a hen's nest, waited till the hen had quitted it, and then took

the eggs and sucked them. After sucking the first, the chicken which had been in the shell began to cry out while descending the fool's throat. 'Ah, my boy,' said he, 'you speak too late.' (Laughter.) My friends, I am not a fool; I know how to suck eggs. (Laughter.) Should England now be disposed to tell me that she is ready to do us justice, I would say to England as the Kerry fool said to the chicken: 'My darling, you speak too late.' (Laughter and applause.)"

He then continued, in the most sublime and rapturous accents:—

"In the presence of my God, and with the most profound feeling of the responsibility attached to the solemn and arduous duties which you Irishmen have twice imposed on me, I accept them, relying not on my own strength, but on yours. The people of Clare know that the only basis of liberty is religion. They have triumphed because the voice raised in behalf of the country was first uttered in prayer to God. Songs of liberty are now heard throughout our green isle, their notes traverse the hills, they fill the valleys, they murmur with the waves of our rivers and streams, and respond in tones of thunder to the echoes of the mountains. Ireland is free!"

One may readily conceive the magic of this speech. I borrow once more from the pen of M. de Cormenin.

"Eloquence does not exercise all its power, its strong, sympathetic, moving power, except upon the

people. Look at O'Connell, the grandest, perhaps the only orator of modern times. How his thundering voice towers over and rules the waves of the multitude! I am not an Irishman, I have never seen O'Connell; I believe I should not understand him. Why, then, am I moved by his discourses—even when translated into a strange tongue, discoloured, stunted, and deprived of the charm of voice and action—more than with all I have ever heard in my own country? It is because they are utterly unlike our jumbled, wordy rhetoric; because it is true passion that inspires him: passion which can and does say all that it has to say. It is, that he draws me from the shore, that he whirls with me, and drags me with him into his current. It is that he shudders, and I shudder; that he utters cries from the depths of his soul which ravish my soul; that he raises me on his wings and sustains me in the sacred transports of liberty. Under the influence of his sublime eloquence, I abhor, I detest with furious hatred, the tyrants of that unfortunate country, just as if I were O'Connell's fellow-citizen; and I seem to love green Ireland as much as my own native land."

Here we have an orator who should be constantly studied by all those who wish to benefit the people.

There is a wide difference between such powerful speeches and those dreary metaphysical sermons, those finely-spun phrases, that quintessence of reasoning, so common amongst us. For, what do we often take for an orator or preacher? . . . One who wraps himself

in his own conceptions, and soars into sublime regions, while the poor audience is left on the plain below to gaze at him or not, to grow weary, to sleep or to chat, when they cannot decently go away.

And yet it is so easy to be popular in France. The native mind is prompt and readily roused to the noblest sentiments. Moreover, we are bound to do the higher classes this justice, that they always tolerate and even admire the preacher who addresses the people. They mingle with the crowd to join in their applause, and, what is better, to profit by what they hear. Yes, strange to say, under the influence of such eloquence, scholars and wits throw aside their arguments and their prejudices, and become one with the people—think, feel, and commend as they do. . . . There are two powerful ways of leading men: to take up with the higher classes or to go to the masses. The latter appears the more powerful nowadays, for opinion and strength always prevail with those whose wills are feeble.

We must retrace our steps, then, and resume a popular style of address, which, to use a homely comparison, consists simply in entering in by the door of the people, and making them go out by ours: for to be truly popular is: to love the people ardently, to throw our souls into theirs, to identify ourselves with them; to think, feel, will, love, as they do; to rouse their instincts of justice, generosity, and pity; to fill their souls with the noblest thoughts; to exalt

with the breath of the Gospel their holiest aspirations, and to send these back to them in burning words, in outbursts and sallies of the heart; and then, as with a back-stroke of the hand, to crush their errors and destroy their vices, and to lead them onward after you, while they shall believe that they are still leading the way; to abase them to the lowest depths, and then to raise them to heaven. In all this, making them to play so prominent a part that, after hearing you, they may almost be led to say with secret satisfaction:—"What an excellent sermon we have delivered!" Then will your words be invested with the two greatest powers in the world: they will be the voice of the people and the voice of God.

CHAPTER V.

THE SERMON SHOULD BE PLAIN.

An obscure Sermon is neither Christian nor French—Abuse of philosophical Terms—Philosophical Speculations not popular amongst us—The French mind is clear and logical—Plainness of Speech—Plainness of Thought—Starting from the Known to the Unknown—Metaphors—Similes—Parables—Facts—Père Lejeune—M. l'Abbé Ledreuil.

THE sermon should be plain. . . .

This truth has been partially demonstrated in the course of the foregoing remarks. It follows, moreover, as a consequence from the nature and design of the Gospel. The religious discourse which is not plain is neither Christian nor French.

The Divine word should be understood by all, even by the poor woman who crouches into a corner of the church; for she too has a soul to save, and her soul is as precious in the sight of God as the soul of a rich or learned man: perhaps more.

This is one of the glories of Christianity. Human lore is only within the reach of those who are able to comprehend it, or who have money enough to pay for

it. The word of God is for all; and none can be deprived of it, as far as the preacher is concerned, without a grave dereliction of duty on his part. Severe censure is passed upon those professors who, to further their own ambitious views, take great pains with some of their pupils and neglect others. This is called a crying injustice, plundering the parents, and so forth. But the matter under consideration involves something far more serious than a pecuniary robbery.

We are all bound to preach the Gospel. Now, the Gospel is remarkably plain. When it was first announced, or while the facts which it narrates were extant or palpable, it must have been surpassingly so. Hence it is not surprising that the multitude upon whom our blessed Lord had been pouring forth the torrents of His Divine eloquence, exclaimed:—"Never man spake like this man!"

Further: he who does not use plain speech does not speak French; for the French language is naturally plain, limpid, and simple, insomuch that obscure speech is not really French: it is Teutonic, a jargon, or a patois; but it is by no means the language of the great Frank people.

All our most celebrated and popular writers and orators had a clear and impressive style. Their weakest passages are those which are most obscure. Voltaire possessed this perspicuity in a high degree; and it was partly on that account that he acquired

so much influence and popularized so many errors. His speech was true French, both in expression and conception; but there was no heart in it. He had perfectly mastered his own tongue, and had equally learned to know the people with whom he had to deal. He who does not use plain speech proves that he possesses neither a knowledge of men nor a knowledge of the Gospel; nor even of his primary duties.

But it will be said:—Is it not occasionally allowable that one should clothe his thoughts in language above the common, in order thereby to raise religion and the preacher in the eyes of the people, who admire what they do not understand?

I do not object, if you believe that any good is to be done in that way, and if you feel incapable of exciting interest by a simple exposition of the beauties of Christianity. But I tell you that the idea savours strongly of charlatanism, and that Christianity has no need of such an auxiliary. Whenever such a course is adopted, it should be regarded as a tolerated exception; but on this point, also, the exception has too frequently been taken for the rule.

Nowadays, the Gospel is almost entirely overlooked, there are so many other matters to be attended to. We must needs discuss and argue, and treat all kinds of philosophical and humanitarian questions. Hence a great part of our time is taken up with talking philosophy to pious men and women,

—and after what fashion? The pulpit resounds with such words as these: rationalism, philosophism, Protestantism, materialism, pantheism, socialism; and it will be lucky if all this does not ultimately get mixed up with fetishism, anthropomorphism, Vishnooism, Buddhism, Kantism, Hegelism, &c. No wonder that a woman of fashion once exclaimed, in a fit of petulance:—"The Lord deliver us from these preachers of *isms!*"

I repeat, it is all well enough that a few eminent men should treat such questions before select audiences; but now every one seems bent on talking philosophy, or on philosophizing about everything. We have the philosophy of theology, the philosophy of the sacraments, the philosophy of the liturgy; and to what does it all tend? To prove that God might have occupied a prominent place among the thinkers of these times: which would be proving very little in God's favour.

There has, indeed, been quite a mania to make philosophy about everything. We have heard a treatise on the philosophy of the hand-grenade. As a malicious wag once remarked:—"We shall soon have the philosophy of boots and shoes."

Hence it is that the ignorance respecting religion everywhere prevailing, among high and low, even among those who constantly hear sermons, is truly deplorable.

Society in general is much less instructed in

matters of religion, and even in philosophical questions, than is usually supposed; for religion is no longer taught. We demonstrate, argue, philosophize, but we do not evangelize. . . . There is so much ignorance among men, otherwise well-informed, on the subject of religion, that they would certainly be deemed unfit for confirmation, even in a country district.

Neither is the community more proficient in philosophical than in religious questions; and much less attention is bestowed upon them than is imagined. We meet with certain systems in special books, or among a particular class of persons, and we may think that those systems are about to make a great stir in the world. But do the masses trouble themselves about them? For the most part, even intelligent men hardly know what to say when referred to on such subjects.

Some years ago, a preacher delivered several discourses in one of the principal towns of France on the subject of rationalism. He decried it in good set terms, and was judged to have spoken very ably. But the wife of a councillor in the Court of Appeal, tired of hearing so much about rationalism without being able to make out what it was, asked her husband, who was a great admirer of the discourses, to explain to her what rationalism meant. The husband stammered out a few words in reply, but was obliged at last to say:—"Sincerely, I know

nothing about it; but inquire of M. le Curé, for he ought to be able to give you the information."

Instead of dragging all these systems into the pulpit, it would have been far better to leave them immured in books and in the schools. They are not dangerous in France while restricted to the formulæ in which they were originally conceived, because philosophical speculations are by no means popular amongst us. The French mind is too precise and active to be taken up with such like dreams and crude systems.

A proof of this is afforded by the old Chamber of Deputies. . . . When a speaker was practical, and entered into the gist of the question in debate, there was profound silence; but if he attempted lofty flights, and soared into the region of philosophical speculations, the attention of the hearers flagged, and a great uproar ensued, insomuch that the luckless orator was frequently driven to call upon the President to enforce silence and order; who, on his part, reiterated that he could not interfere. . . . Altogether such scenes presented a curious study.

Generally speaking, the Frenchman is essentially a practical man.

It is true that ever and anon we pretend to great depth; but the malady is momentary and does not last long. We are, in fact, like certain eminent men who affect a speciality to which they have no just claim, and who consider themselves more honoured

by a compliment for an acquirement which they do not possess, than by any which may be paid them for a talent for which they are really conspicuous.

In combating this tendency and these systems, we must be on our guard against assailing them with hazy tirades or dull metaphysics. We should drag them into the full light of the Gospel, and dissect them by translating them into plain French, and then they will soon disappear altogether. We must further bear in mind that the truth, and especially evangelical truth, is only rightly apprehended by the heart; whereas there is a general disposition amongst us to be always reasoning. Are we not aware that bare reason is foolishly vain, dishonest, stern, and sometimes pitiless, and that to be constantly appealing to its authority is to lose our time, and to engender the most deplorable ignorance in matters of religion?

The people are very fond of understanding what is addressed to them, for it raises them in their own eyes, and is, moreover, a real gratification to them. Therein they are active, whereas when merely astounded they are simply passive; to say nothing of the additional fact that they go away as ignorant as they came.

A preacher who had been specially appointed to deliver a course of sermons in one of our towns, was accosted while walking out by a poor woman, upon whom his presence seemed to produce a lively im-

pression of joy, which was forthwith manifested in these words:—"How delighted I am to have met you! I must tell you that I attend your sermons and understand them. Yes, believe me, even I understand your sermons. Everybody says that you are a *savant*, but for my part I don't believe it; because, whenever our rector or his curates preach, I don't understand anything they say; whereas when you preach I understand all. If you were a *savant*, an ignoramus like me would not be able to understand you." . . .

We must retrace our steps, then, and return to a clear, plain, simple, and vivifying exposition of the Gospel; for when religion is set forth in that way it is always attractive. We may have to study much to attain it, but when once Christianity is rightly understood, and we get thoroughly to know those with whom we have to do, we shall find it possible to acquire an influence over their minds and hearts, and easy to adapt our style to the intelligence of all. You should see the working classes when addressed by one of our great preachers: their countenances brighten, their eyes glisten, their bosoms glow. They understand, they are moved, they applaud.

To attain this plainness—speech being the vehicle of thought—words should never be used which are not generally understood. There are terms in language which are common to the literary and non-literary; only such should be adopted, and all

scientific, philosophical, technical, theological, and even devotional terminology should be discarded. Our age is not strong in spiritual matters: they speak a language which it does not even care to learn, for it does not feel the need of it.

Use none of those set phrases, those trite expressions, which follow one after another in all sermonizers for the last half century. They form a threadbare language which no longer conveys any meaning, and which is quite unfit for the transmission of thought. Drive them from your pen and lips; try to acquire a disgust, a hatred for them: they are more unintelligible than either Latin or Greek. You would do well to abstain entirely from perusing such sermonizers, because one unwittingly picks up their hackneyed phraseology; which will recur to you when you are at a loss what else to say. Moreover, they prevent you from being natural. . . .

It is desirable, doubtless, that you should read Bourdaloue for doctrine, Bossuet for touch and for the sublime, Massillon for style and form; but let that suffice. Then read the Scriptures, the Fathers, books of devotion, and such other works as will make you acquainted with the wants and tendencies of the age, and teach you how to combat its passions and its errors.

You must beware, however, of attempting to preach like Bossuet, Bourdaloue, or Massillon. They addressed courtiers, and the élite of society of their

times, when men had more knowledge of religion than they have now. Besides, if those eminent preachers lived in these days, there is every reason to believe that they would not always speak now as they did then,

Plain speech should be coupled with plain thought.

The thoughts which serve as starting points, should always be simple, natural, and popular. The people do not understand abstractions or the speculations of reason, which are to them a strange language. You should start from the known to lead them to the unknown. That is the mathematical and logical method. You must begin with sensible, visible, and above all with actual things, in order to draw them gently towards spiritual and invisible things, and to the life that is to come. By adopting this course, you may conduct them far onward, and elevate them to great heights, even to the sublimest aspirations of heart and soul. . . . As we have already said by way of example: first exhibit religion to them as grand, good, and lovely, then as true and divine; winding up by fervently and energetically insisting on the necessity of submission to its moral law.

It is an excellent plan to adopt the ordinary expressions in every-day use among the people, and to apply them in a religious sense. Thus, you might tell them to lay up in the *Savings' Bank* of Heaven, to become members of the *Refuge Fund* of Eternity, and you will be understood.

Monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris, during some of his visitations, furnishes us with a delightful model of this style of addressing the people :—

"My children," said he to the operatives who had assembled in a courtyard to see and hear him,—"my children, while attending to your worldly interests and material welfare—for the increase of which you have my sincere wishes—think also sometimes of that God who created us, and in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Do you know what that man resembles who lives without God and without hope? He is like a piece of wheel-work out of gear, or a faulty machine, which only mars what it ought to make, wounds the hand which it should help, and obliges the owner to break it up and throw it aside.

"Maintain, then, my beloved children, the sentiments, and practise the duties which belong to your dignity as men. As workmen, be industrious, honest, and temperate, and your condition will be as happy as it can be here below, remembering that rest will come after toil; for we are all the day-labourers of a gracious God, and life is but a day, at the end of which we shall receive ample wages, and be abundantly recompensed for all our pains.

"My children, I am glad to see that my words affect you. I regret being obliged to separate from you; but before going I give you my benediction as an earnest of my paternal tenderness, and of all the Divine graces which I invoke upon you, upon all

who are dear to you, upon your families and your labours."

We should begin, then, by exhibiting the material aspects of religion, proceeding from thence to doctrines and duties, without ceasing to be simple, true, and natural throughout. This, however, is not the usual course pursued: we start with metaphysics, move onward through a redundant phraseology, and end by making religion more unintelligible than ever.

But we must be fair: preachers are not wholly to blame in this matter; for if one tries to be simple, true, natural and evangelical, they will tell him in certain districts that his style is not sufficiently high-flown, that it does not do honour to the pulpit. This actually occurred to one of our best preachers. A member of the congregation came to him and said:—"You speak admirably; but there is one drawback to your sermons, they are too well understood." So that the poor preacher, in order to carry out the views of his adviser, felt that he would be obliged to invoke the Holy Spirit to give him grace to say unintelligible things! . . . What they wanted was something bombastic, academical, and highly seasoned; and such is what is generally regarded as constituting a profound, dignified, and useful sermon.

Look at our blessed Lord: surely He knew what real dignity was. Or, let us study the Gospel: do we find there any of these fine airs, this inflated and consequential tone? It is simple, clear, and profound

throughout. We hear it occasionally said of certain individuals :—" He cannot adapt himself to the capacity of every one ; his knowledge is far too high and deep for that ;" which means, that the poor man indicated has heaped up in his brains, pell-mell, a mass of ill-digested ideas which he is unable to call forth with any thing like order : and that is all. The truly profound man, on the contrary, is always clear. He moves calmly through the highest regions of science, and is as much at his ease there as if he were at home. He sees things, and he narrates them. He turns his thoughts over and over again, putting them into a thousand forms, so as to be able to place them within reach of the feeblest intellects. Take M. Arago as an example of this wisdom and simplicity combined. He succeeds in rendering the highest problems of astronomy intelligible, and that in a few words, even to very young children. . . .

Herein, also, a wrong estimate has been formed of the French mind ; since even those who move in the highest circles of society much prefer what is simple, clear, and natural.

There is a well-known preacher in Paris who gives familiar lectures—they are real sermons—even when appointed select season-preacher. He has been preaching for the last twenty years without ever sparing himself, readily responding to every call. Crowds of the elegant world, notwithstanding, press round his pulpit, and there is always the same

affluence of hearers. The most eminent of preachers, who adopted a different style of address, would have been used-up long since.

A priest, full of the Spirit of God, died some years ago in the flower of his age. He was remarkable in the art of giving plain and simple lectures. After his death, these lectures, in a mutilated form, were collected and published by a female, and obtained as wide a circulation as the most celebrated discourses.

Plain speech pleases and benefits all; whereas what is called sublime speech only amuses a few, and benefits fewer still.

But one of the most effectual ways of making the truth understood by the people is by metaphor and simile. They speak an analogous language themselves and readily understand it; more especially when the comparisons are drawn from visible, present, or actual things, and when they are striking or popular. The Sacred Scriptures are full of expositions of this nature, and the sermons of Père Lejeune also contain a rich mine of the same class.

O'Connell did not overlook this means of influencing the people, and he sometimes employed it in the most picturesque and characteristic fashion.

He was one day assailing the hereditary peerage. "What are the lords?" said he. "Because the father was considered a good legislator, therefore the son must be the same! Just as if a man who proposed to make you a coat should answer the question: Are you

a tailor? by saying that his father before him was. Is there any of you who would employ such an hereditary tailor? This principle of common sense as regards the lords will become popular in time. We want no hereditary legislators or tailors. Do you ask who will make this principle popular? I reply, the lords themselves, who show themselves to be very bad tailors."

Above all, similes drawn from actual things make a still greater impression.

Thus, steam-engines and railroads are a common topic of conversation nowadays, and form a rich source from whence to derive matter for stirring similes and for profitable instruction. For example, you wish to point out the necessity of mastering the passions, and of restraining them by the laws of God. The heart of man may be likened to a steam-engine of terrific power, which we should mistrust, and which requires to be under the most vigorous control.

Look at the locomotive confined within its iron furrows. It is a wonderful thing; it approximates distances, developes commerce, and contributes to the welfare of man. There is much in it to call forth gratitude to a beneficent Providence. But look at it when thrown off the line. O God! what do I hear and see? I hear the most piercing and heart-rending screams; I see blood flowing, limbs broken, heads crushed; and I turn from the spectacle, and almost

curse the inventor. . . . In like manner, the heart of man, when restrained by the law of God, is worthy of all admiration; it begets the noblest and sublimest virtues, and scatters the blessings of a good example all around. It brings joy and gladness to the domestic hearth, rendering all those happy who love it; and on seeing such results I am proud of being a man. But once beyond the bounds of that law—thrown off the rails, as it were—O God! what do I hear and see? I hear bitter lamentations, the harrowing cries of mothers, wives, and children. I see vice, and crime, and shame mantling on the brow of those who indulge therein; and at the sight of so much misery and degradation I am tempted to utter imprecations, and almost blush that I am a man.

Finally, another way of simplifying truth is by narrative, of which the people are very fond. They cast everything, even spiritual things, into tales, legends, and facts, which they take pleasure in learning to recite. We should imitate them, by putting a moral or dogmatic truth into action, connecting it with a fact, and then narrate it; in short, give it the form of a little drama. When skilfully employed, this method has a powerful effect upon the people, and even upon educated men. The *Paroles d'un Croyant* owed a part of the notoriety which it acquired to this feature. The people must have facts, and often nothing but facts. In like manner the Gospel narrates, but seldom argues. The Holy Scriptures

are full of truths rendered palpable, as it were, by scenic representation.

Thus the prophet Isaiah exposes the folly of idolatry in these words:—

"Who hath formed a god or a graven image that is profitable for nothing? . . . He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak from among the trees of the forest; he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. . . . He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he eateth roast and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down to it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood, for he hath shut their eyes that they cannot see, and their hearts that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it; and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

Père Lejeune, apart from certain quaint and obsolete modes of expression, has some charming things of

this sort, which must have produced a marvellous effect. He is attempting to point out the heinousness of sin, and to describe the punishment of Adam and Eve :—

"Picture to yourselves, then, the unfortunate pair, staff in hand, going forth from the earthly paradise, carrying nothing with them but two skins, given them out of compassion by the Judge, to cover their nakedness. They found themselves in the fields as if they had fallen from the clouds, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, to wild beasts, and to their own natural infirmities, without shelter, bed, linen, bread, covering for their hands or feet; without thread or needle, knife or hammer, destitute of any implements beyond their own feeble arms. They collect stones as best they may, and cement them together with mud to form a low room, and cover it with branches of trees, which they are obliged to break off with their hands; for they had neither saw nor hatchet. They gather leaves for their couch, and fruits and wheat for their subsistence; but if they wanted any in years to come, they must till the ground, or rather they must dig it up with sticks, having no other kind of spade. Think, then, of the woman, and of the straits to which she must have been put on being seized with the pangs of labour, which she had never before experienced, and on being confined with her first child. When she saw her firstborn ushered into the world in its natural state, moaning and trembling with the cold, and found herself utterly destitute of linen, cradle, cap, bandages, and

all the other requisites for a new-born babe,—when she was called to bear all this, how poignantly she must have recognized the enormity of her offence!

"But when both parents saw their son Abel, a youth as beautiful as a star, gentle as a lamb, and devout as an angel, stretched stark dead upon the ground, wounded and weltering in his blood, a ghastly spectacle to behold; the bloom on his face gone, his lips livid, the light of his eyes utterly extinguished,—on first beholding all this, they could have no idea that he was dead, for they had never witnessed death; but drawing near they say:—'Abel, what dost thou here? Who hath done this?' The dead are silent. 'My beloved Abel, why speakest thou not? My son! my soul! I pray thee speak?' But Abel has no more words, no more voice, no sight, no motion. Decay soon sets in, and Abel becomes foul and corrupt, and father and mother are obliged to cover him with earth. When at length they learn that it was their sin which had given entrance to death, what grief, what tears, what anger against the fatal tree, against the tempter, against themselves, and against everything which had contributed to their disobedience, must have agitated the wretched pair! Why did we pluck of that tree? Why did we not burn it rather than be tempted to gather its fruit? Why did we not quit the earthly paradise, and flee to the end of the world to avoid the risk of so tremendous an evil? Why did I not pluck out my eyes

rather than look upon that which I was forbidden to know? Ill-advised that I was, why did I suffer myself to be amused with talking to the serpent? Liar, thou didst assure me that we should be as gods, and behold we are more humiliated and miserable than the beasts of the field!

"In like manner, when you are in hell, you will regret, and lament, and resolve; but it will then be too late. You will be maddened with spite and rage against everything that has conspired to your condemnation. Alas! why did I not cut out my tongue when preachers told me that my oaths would damn me? Why did I not smite to death this scandalous bosom of mine? Why did I not destroy the papers of that lawsuit which I prosecuted so unjustly, and the schedule and bond of that poor man who could not pay the usurious interest which I charged him for money lent? Why did I not leave the town and province, and bury myself in the wilds of Canada, rather than remain where there was an occasion of my falling into sin?"

In concluding, I must be permitted to quote a more recent example, premising that I only adduce it as a model of familiar conversation with the working classes.

M. l'Abbé Ledreuil, in an address to operatives, is endeavouring to convince them that they have no reason to envy the rich, since the working man has his share of joy and happiness as well as they. He expresses himself somewhat as follows, though I must

apologize for abridging, and therefore for disfiguring his lecture :—

"My friends, do not envy the rich, and don't believe them happy because they have nothing to do. The rich must work, after their fashion, under pain of being unhappy and of leading a miserable existence. Hence it is that, for the most part, they condemn themselves to work as you do. . . . And do you know how one of this class passes his life who does not work? I will tell you: he thinks everything a bore, and he yawns.

"In the morning, he no sooner begins to dress than he stops short. He is so tired! He stretches his limbs, and—he yawns.

"He next sets about his toilet, which is a very formidable affair to him; enters into his dressing-room —quite a perfumery shop in its way—looks around him, and then—he yawns.

"Breakfast-time comes. He goes to the breakfast-room, surveys the different dishes, knows not which to choose, for the poor man is not hungry, and—he yawns.

"After breakfast, he takes up a paper and skims over it. Pugh! politics are so uninteresting. Then more than ever—he yawns.

"Towards noon, or one o'clock, he must go out, and asks himself: Where shall I go to-day? Shall I go to Madame So-and-so? No, she is at the waters. I will go to Mr. So-and-so. By the way, he is in the country; and then—he yawns.

"For something better to do, he seeks the promenade, where he meets a friend of his own stamp. They shake the tips of each other's fingers, not to hurt their hands, touch the brims of their hats, and then together, one more than the other,—they yawn.

"He next takes a chair, adjusts his feet on the bars, places himself at his ease, thinks of nothing, looks vacantly into the air, or bites the head of his cane, and then—he yawns.

"In the evening he goes to the theatre, extends himself at full length in his box, gazes around him, listens, and then—he yawns.

"He returns home very late. He is quite worn out and needs sleep, and ends the day as he began it —he yawns.

"Not so the labourer: he rises early, goes to his work betimes, and he sings or whistles.

"The breakfast-hour arrives. He loses no time in examining which dish he will partake of, for there is only one. He does not yawn over it, but eats with a good appetite, and in the same cheery mood he passes the remainder of the day.

"My friends, don't be discontented with your lot. Don't say:—'If I were rich I would take my ease;' for work is a blessing. Don't envy the rich, but be thankful for what God has given you. The honest and industrious workman, who has a good heart, and loves virtue, is the spoilt child of Providence."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SERMON SHOULD BE SHORT.

The Discourses of the Fathers were short—The French Mind is quick to apprehend—Sermons are generally too long—Sermons of Ten, Seven, and of Five Minutes.

"LONG sermons bore us,"* says M. de Cormenin; "and when a Frenchman is bored, he leaves the place and goes away. If he cannot so retire, he remains and talks. If he cannot talk, he yawns and falls asleep. Anyhow, he declares that he will not come again. . . ."

The sermon should be short. At all events, it must not bore. Bore or ennui is fatal in France, and is never pardoned. It has been said, there are two things which are not permitted in France, namely, to ridicule and to bore. Unhappily, the former is allowed nowadays, for there are many who use it, and many who abuse it; but on the article of bore, society is still inflexible and implacable. The man

* "*Nous ennuient.*" It is useless to attempt giving the full force of the French *ennui* in any one English word. That above adopted appears to me the nearest approach to it which our language affords; still it comes far short of the expressive original.—TRANSLATOR.

who is deemed a bore is shunned and detested. . . . We, the clergy, must beware of exciting this antipathy on the score of religion; the more so, because most minds secrete a stock of the sentiment, which is readily called forth when they are brought in contact with anything serious.

On the other hand, why preach so long? I know not how we have allowed ourselves to be led into these lengthy discourses. What is the good of it? What is the object? We speak in God's name. Now, power and majesty are always chary of words; yet such words are not the less efficacious for being few. The instructions of our blessed Lord, who is the Divine Master of us all, were uniformly short. Even the Sermon on the Mount, which has revolutionized the world, does not appear to have lasted more than half an hour. The homilies of the Fathers also were short, and Saint Ambrose says:—"*Nec nimium prolixus sit sermo ne fastidium pariat; semihoræ tempus communiter non excedat.*" Saint François de Sales, too, recommends short sermons, and remarks that excessive length was the general fault in the preachers of his time.

He says:—"The good Saint François, in his rules to the preachers of his Order, directs that their sermons should be short.

"Believe me, and I speak from experience, the more you say, the less will the hearers retain; the less you say, the more they will profit. By dint of

burdening their memory, you will overwhelm it; just as a lamp is extinguished by feeding it with too much oil, and plants are choked by immoderate irrigation.

"When a sermon is too long, the end erases the middle from the memory, and the middle the beginning.

"Even mediocre preachers are acceptable, provided their discourses are short; whereas even the best preachers are a burden when they speak too long."

Is not long preaching very much like an attempt to surpass these men, who were so highly imbued with the spirit of Christianity?

On the other hand, we have to deal with the most intelligent, keen, and sensible people in the world. They understand a thing when only half stated, and very often divine it. You hardly speak before they are moved to accept or to reject; and yet we overcharge them with long and heavy dissertations. To act in this way, is to evince an utter unacquaintance with one's people, and to display our own ignorance, in spite of all the learning which we may possess. Moreover, it tends to excite antipathy. The Frenchman does not care to be treated like a German: he does not wish to be told everything, thereby depriving him of the pleasure of working out the truth for himself. Open the vein, lance his imagination and feelings, and let them flow on the road to truth, and he will

pursue it alone; perchance more quickly and farther than you. Nothing impairs intelligence, sentiment, and the effusion of thought so much as redundancy of words and even of ideas.

A sharp working man, who had been listening to a sermon, was once asked—

"What did the preacher say? What do you remember of his sermon?"

"Nothing at all."

"How's that? Surely you heard him?"

"Perfectly."

"How is it, then, that you did not understand anything?"

"Ah," replied he, in an original language, which only the people can command, "because all he had to say was hid behind a mass of words."

There is too much reminiscence of our philosophical and scholastic studies in our sermons. It often appears as if we were speaking to a meeting of young bachelors in theology. We seem to believe—and the notion is generally taken for granted—that we have not adequately developed an idea unless we discuss it for an hour or for three-quarters of an hour at the least.

Thus the audience is overwhelmed under the weight of a ponderous erudition. It is not sufficient that they should have one proof set before them, they must submit to any conceivable number on the same subject. Or, to use M. de Cormenin's language,

preachers keep on using the flat side of their sword with weak proofs, after they have given a decisive thrust with the weapon's point. What has been said a thousand times before is repeated, and what everybody knows, or what nobody needs to know, is dilated upon to no purpose.

A man must be endowed with extraordinary genius who can bring forcible thoughts to bear upon one and the same subject for the space of a whole hour. But this consideration does not appear to occasion the least embarrassment. The vacuities of thought are filled up with words, and that is called developing an idea.

For the most part, we are all convinced that others speak too long, but we are beguiled by the world's flattery.

We preach, and people are delighted, and send intimations to us that we have acquitted ourselves to admiration; that they would gladly have listened to us much longer, and so forth.

But we know better than any one else that the world does not always speak the truth, and that we ourselves have frequently denounced its want of sincerity. How comes it, then, that we are deluded by such fine speeches? In flattering us, the world simply plies its trade; but it is our duty not to give heed to its blandishments. Moreover, there prevails at present a strong and universal conviction that, generally speaking, our sermons are too long.

Ask whom you please, enemies and friends, ask even the most fervent Christians—thanks be to God there are intelligent men, and men renowned for their charity among the sincerely religious — ask them, I say, and they will tell you that our sermons and services are too long. And if pious and intelligent men are of that opinion, what must the masses think?

Undoubtedly, the intention is praiseworthy. . . . We aim at securing a greater good by lengthening out the services and sermon. Still, it is equally certain that in so doing we discard both prudence and charity. It resembles the ordinary treatment of wives, who insist on giving their sick husbands good strong broth, on the plea that it will do them more good than all the chemist's medicines. The intention is unquestionably a kind one; but it is no less true that the regimen, instead of benefiting the patients, is more likely to kill them outright. Alas! the same result has followed a similar injudicious treatment of men's souls.

A man of high intellectual attainments, recently converted, declared that the manner in which he was bored by sermons during his youth, had kept him from listening to them for twenty years. We complain, and with reason, that the masses have ceased to frequent the church, and that sermons nowadays are not popular. But do not we assist in driving them away? The services are longer now than they

were in the 17th and 18th centuries, when there was more faith abroad among the people generally.

Religion would most probably be greatly promoted if the sermon and the services also were abridged. This might readily be effected as regards the latter. Pitch your music out of the window, or rather out of the door, as the former might not be considered parliamentary. Or, take care at least that the polkas with which your organist embellishes the *Magnificat* shall not occupy more than a quarter of an hour. With respect to the sermons, they might easily be shortened without injuring them in the least. Lop off all commonplace considerations from the exordium, all useless discussions from the body of the discourse, and all vague phrases from the peroration. Prune away all redundant words, all parasitical epithets, using only those that triple the force of the substantive. Be chary of words and phrases; economize them as a miser does his crown-pieces. The people affect those thoughts which are formulated in a single word. They like such expressions as the following: — *vive!* . . . *à bas!* . . . *mort!* . . . *vengeance!* . . . *liberté!* . . . *justice!* These simple words often move men more than a long discourse.

In this respect, however, there has been a marked improvement in many of our churches. There are parishes in Paris where a rule prevails that no one shall preach more than forty minutes. In some

popular meetings, preachers are not allowed to speak beyond fifteen minutes, and it is there that the most good is done.

Nowadays, brevity is one of the first conditions of success, and of promoting the welfare of souls.

The preacher who was most frequented at Paris during the Lenten season this year, hardly ever exceeded half-an-hour. There are, undoubtedly, many other rules to be observed, but brevity will not injuriously affect any of them.

The people are easily impressed: they like to be moved; but nothing passes away so quickly as an emotion. In order to bring them back to the church, we must have sermons of ten, seven, and even of five minutes' duration. The mass and the sermon together should not exceed half-an-hour.

This plan has been attempted. The experiment was made, and produced the most happy and unexpected results. Intelligent and zealous incumbents, distressed at seeing that the greater part of their flock scarcely ever heard the word of God or went to church, established a low mass, announced as specially designed for the men, with a lecture of from ten to five minutes' duration every Sunday. . . . Crowds flocked to the church, which was sometimes found too small to hold them. Nor was this all: many attended high mass also, and even went to the confessional; which they had not done, some for twenty, some for thirty, and some for forty years. This success was

obtained in irreligious as well as religious districts, and under the most unfavourable circumstances; even in populous manufacturing towns. And the same plan is practicable everywhere. Frequently, nothing more is required than a man to take the initiative with a right good will, in order to attract crowds to the church and to religion.

But it will be objected: What can be said in ten or seven minutes? Much, much more than is generally thought, when due preparation is made, when we have a good knowledge of mankind, and are well versed in religious matters. . . . Have not a few words often sufficed to revolutionize multitudes, and to produce an immense impression?

The harangues of Napoleon only lasted a few minutes, yet they electrified whole armies. The speech at Bourdeaux did not exceed a quarter of an hour, and yet it resounded throughout the world. Had it been longer, it would have been less effective. In fifteen weeks, with a sermon of seven minutes every Sunday, one might give a complete course of religious instruction, if the sermons were well digested beforehand.*

If, then, you wish to be successful, in the first place fix the length of your sermon, and never go beyond the time; be inflexible on that score. Should you exceed it, apologize to your audience for so

* We have chosen the seven minutes' sermon, because experience has taught us that it attracts the greatest numbers.

doing, and prove in the pulpit of truth that you can be faithful to your word.

In your course of instruction, do not follow the old method which commences with metaphysical questions and principles; but adhere to the plan which we have indicated: start from the known to the unknown . . .

In the first place, disconnect religion from all prejudices and passions, and from everything uncongenial. Discard all objections and antagonisms. Exhibit it as good and lovely, then true, then divine, then as obligatory, proceeding onward from thence to God's commandments and to the sacraments. If you apprehend that the term "God's commandments," does not sufficiently strike your hearers, you may call them the duties of an upright man.

When about to compose your sermon, study your subject thoroughly, grasp the salient points, and then write. . . . .

But do not stop there; begin afresh. Supposing that you have written four pages, reduce them to two, taking care that all the strong thoughts and sentiments remain. . . . Use those terms which belong to a single thought, those expressions which imprint themselves—or, as the Scripture says, engrave the truth as with a pen of steel—on the hearts of men, and which scatter it abroad full of life and exultation. Nothing is so profitable as this exercise: it cultivates and supples the intellect, gives us a deeper insight into

Christianity and mankind, and it teaches us how to think, and how to write. . . .

During the reading of the Gospel, ascend the pulpit and be quite ready. Place your watch by your side and begin thus:—"Last Sunday we said so and so. To-day we continue." . . . Then enter fully into your subject, enlightening the minds of your hearers or stirring up their hearts as may be suitable, during the discourse. When the allotted time arrives, stop short and conclude.

"But do speak more at length . . . you are wrong in being so brief . . . you only tantalize your audience . . . you deprive them of a real pleasure." Expostulations like these will pour in upon you; but don't listen to them: be inflexible, for those who urge them are enemies without knowing it. Be more rigid than ever in observing the rule which you have prescribed for yourself. Then your sermon will be talked of—it will be a phenomenon—everybody will come to *see* a sermon of seven minutes' duration. The people will come; the rich will follow. Faith will bring the one, and curiosity will attract the other, and thus the Divine word will have freer course and be glorified. . . .

If the men do not come, appeal to the women, and ask them to help you. If you want to attract the women, announce that you intend preaching specially for the men. You will find this method infallible; the men will follow.

Moreover, go yourself and find them out: visit the workshops, factories and wharves. Be particularly attentive to those who are shabbily dressed and ill-favoured. On taking your departure, tell them with a smile that French politeness—in which you feel quite sure they are not deficient — demands that visits received should be returned; that you will dispense with their coming to you personally, but will expect to see them at the seven minutes' sermon. The result will not disappoint you.

When you have many male hearers, you should reserve a space for them. The women will complain that thereby they are placed farther away; but you must appease them with a compliment. Tell them that you know their charity, and are persuaded that they would not certainly wish to hinder the word of God from being heard by those who need it most.

When you have well cultivated your congregation, when a strong current of sympathy and charity has set in from them to you and from you to them, when a number of conversions shall have been made, then you may think of sending some of them to high mass and to vespers. Don't fail to felicitate such :—"You have come hither to hear me. So far well, and I am greatly rejoiced at it. Still you may do something better: you may attend high mass," adding your reasons, and then conclude somewhat in this style :—"Now, I hope that those who are rightly disposed will attend high mass. I only want the badly disposed,

poor downright sinners, at my sermons." You will be obeyed by some, and you will thereby do much towards repopularizing religion; and when those who are not converted fall sick they will say:—"Send for the man who preaches the seven minutes' sermon; I don't want any other." Thus God will be blessed and glorified. . . .

Here, then, you have a very simple and cheap means of restoring the people to religion. It may be put into practice everywhere: in great cities, in small towns, and even in hamlets. The subject is one for serious reflection. Even in our most religiously-disposed towns, hardly a third of the inhabitants habitually hear the word of God. Elsewhere, matters are still worse; and yet all are sheep of the same Divine Pastor, all have a soul to save. Moreover, according to all theologians, every incumbent of a cure is required, *sub gravi*, to preach at low mass, whenever the faithful generally do not attend high mass. Hence, by pursuing the course above indicated, we may not only save others but shall also exonerate ourselves.

CHAPTER VII.

TACT AND KINDLINESS.

We should assume that our Hearers are what we wish them to be—Reproaches to be avoided—How to address Unbelievers—Special Precautions to be taken in small Towns and rural Districts—How to treat Men during times of public Commotion—Forbearance due to the Church for being obliged to receive Money from the Faithful.

IN France, it is not enough to say good things, they must also be well said. This remark applies to all, but more especially to him who speaks in behalf of the Gospel; for he is bound to follow the Divine injunction: —"Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves;" which I should prefer to see carried out as commented upon by St. François de Sales:—"Ah! my dear Philothea, I would give a hundred serpents for one dove."

It is especially in this respect that we should endeavour to reduce to practice what has already been advanced on the importance of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the people, and the necessity of loving them in order to our being qualified to address them to good purpose. We must make ourselves Sisters of

Charity to the souls of men; having all their pliancy and kindness, so as to be capable of conforming ourselves to those light, weak, vain and fickle characters—to say nothing of the suspicious and malevolent—with whom we may have to deal. Our age is arrayed in prejudices from head to foot, and no sooner is one destroyed than another is ready to take its place.

For the most part, a great mistake is made as regards this necessity of exercising tact in our intercourse with the people. It is remarked:—"We have to do with little people, such circumspection is therefore uncalled for. Why should we give ourselves so much trouble on their account?" Very true; but little people are often very susceptible people everywhere; not among the laity only, but among the clergy likewise.

The people have certain formalities, courtesies, and politenesses of their own which we should learn to respect, for when once outraged, they are more difficult to be appeased than the educated and genteel classes. Complaints are often made of our congregations; but have they not sometimes cause on their part to complain of their preachers? . . . Are these latter always prudent and conciliatory in their mode of procedure? And yet success depends on this mixture of tact and kindliness.

In our sermons, we should start with assuming that the people are what we wish them to be; thereby raising them in their own estimation, and laying hold

of them by their better part. . . . You will then feel yourself quite at ease, and in spite of any desire on the part of your hearers to oppose you, they will be restrained from doing so by an exquisite sentiment of respect.

A *religieux* who was engaged on a mission in a rural district, had announced that a particular gallery, which had previously been occupied by the men, would in future be reserved for the ladies forming the choir. Now, the men were much attached to the said gallery, and were determined to keep it. Accordingly, the day after, long before the sermon, they installed themselves in it as usual.

On ascending the pulpit, the preacher noticed that his directions had not been attended to. What would he do? Command or scold? A vulgar man might have done so under the circumstances, but he got over the difficulty by a compliment.

Turning towards the occupants of the gallery, he addressed them in a kindly tone as follows:—"My dear friends, you are aware that the gallery was set apart for the ladies. Now, French politeness calls upon us always to give place to the ladies, and not to deprive them of it. From what I already know of you, I feel persuaded that you will not be behindhand in that respect." . . . "We have put our foot into it," whispered the men one to another; "and can hold out no longer. Ah! the crafty fellow, he has outwitted us, and we must go." The gallery was evacu-

ated forthwith and made over to the ladies; to the satisfaction of all, even of those who had been worsted in the affair. That is the way to deal with the people. The preacher might have asserted his absolute authority on the occasion; but, like a wise man, he preferred the exercise of prudence and charity.

We repeat it: the most effectual way of communicating the truth to the people, of putting them in the right way, and of reforming them, is not to be chary of complimenting them when they have deserved it ever so little; and to show that we have confidence in them. This course tends to gladden their souls; disposes them to what is good, exalts, elates them. It should never be neglected, for it is capable of transforming the most obstinate characters.

Subsequent to the revolution of 1848, an association of unemployed operatives was formed at the church of the Carmelites; amongst whom was a number of sharpers, makers of barricades, and workmen always on the look-out for work—men clothed in rags and in a state of complete destitution. There were about twelve hundred of them. A meal was first served out to them, which was followed by a lecture.

The priests who addressed them soon acquired an irresistible ascendancy over this formidable body; so much so that certain parties took umbrage at it, as a dangerous power to be wielded by the clergy, and

accordingly hired a set of roughs to hiss and otherwise disturb the congregation.

The preacher, who was apprised of this on entering the pulpit, did not manifest the least discomposure. Before beginning the sermon, however, he looked round upon the sinister figures and tattered habiliments of his hearers with a benevolent countenance, and then said in a sonorous voice :—"What a pleasant meeting this is, my friends! What an excellent audience! what silence! what attention! Therein I recognize the people. . . . Père Lacordaire preaches at Notre-Dame to the noble and wealthy, and it is found necessary to station constables there to maintain order. . . . None but men of the people are here, and yet we have no constables amongst us. We do not want them, for the people are their own police; the people are discreet." . . .

He then delivered his sermon, which was listened to amidst the most profound silence. Never was an audience of nuns more attentive than those men; their deportment was admirable. The roughs took the hint, saw that their game was up, and that those who had engaged them would lose their money. They accordingly moved towards the door.

When the sermon was over, however, a few hisses were attempted; but fifty stalwart arms instantly seized the intruders, and administered a castigation to them which was by no means fraternal.

By laying hold of men in this manner we may

lead them onward a great way on the road to improvement. . . .

One should be very cautious not to assume that his hearers are wicked, impious, or unbelieving. The people do not relish such imputations: they don't like reproaches; neither do you, dear reader. They rarely do any good, and often much harm.

If it is deemed desirable to censure a fault, a vice, or a scandal, such delinquencies may be treated of in a general way, and energetically denounced. In applying the lesson to your hearers, you might say in a subdued tone:—"Malpractices like these are committed elsewhere. It is even stated that you are not wholly free from them; but perhaps it is only the malevolent who say this of you. However, if you have really been guilty of them, I am sure you will abandon them in future. It is always a duty to prove that the malevolent are in the wrong." You may further add:—"I will do you this justice, that whenever I have given you any advice, I have always had the satisfaction of finding that some at least have profited by it."

It shows a want of charity as well as tact—and it is, morever, deplorably vulgar—to address a congregation in such a style as the following:—"All my preaching, and all the trouble which I take in your behalf are in vain, for you are not a whit better. Faith is departing from France. . . . I must abandon you to your fate. No matter how I preach, none the

more come to the sermons." . . . I say this mode of address is as vulgar and contemptible as it is derogatory to the minister of the Gospel. Saint John Chrysostom, as already remarked, did not talk in that style:—"If you reject my words," said he, "I shall not shake off the dust of my feet against you. Not that herein I would disobey the Saviour; but because the love which He has given me for you prevents my doing so." . . .

If sermons are not attended, whose fault is it? It is our duty to look into that question. At all events, if only a few come it is not certainly their fault, and therefore they should be spared all reproaches; otherwise some captious hearer—and such are to be met with everywhere—may slip into a corner of the pulpit, and say:—"Take care, Mr. Preacher; you are speaking ill of the absent, and you know better than I do that such a proceeding is improper." . . .

If your audience is scanty, I can quite fancy that you would like to comment upon it, and also to express a little annoyance at the fact; but you may do something better. Begin by congratulating those who are present, thank them heartily for coming to listen to you, and tell them afterwards, in an affectionate manner, that it would be a praiseworthy act if they could induce one or two of their comrades to accompany them to the next meeting. Instead of uttering reproaches against the erring absentees,

which your hearers might report to them, charge the latter to communicate words of kindness to them : —"Tell those dear brethren who do not attend the lectures, that we bear them no ill-will ; that we love all of them ; that they too are our children ; and that we never cease praying for them." Thereby all will be edified, and God will be less offended. . . .

Further, it is highly imprudent to say to one's audience :—"I have preached to you a long time, and yet you are still the same : I see no improvement in you. On the contrary, evil increases every year. I wash my hands of you ; you will be lost : you will be damned." . . . Now, the people do not like to be damned, or to be discouraged. Besides, such a course is highly dangerous. . . . Might they not say :—"As it seems that we are damned already, let us at least enjoy life while it lasts." Moreover, may there not still be a portion for the pastor, even from among the erring flock ?

An incumbent once recapitulated in the pulpit the results of his ministrations in this language :— "My time is thrown away upon you, for you become more and more ungodly.

"The first year of my cure there were only five persons who did not communicate at Easter.

"The second year there were eleven.

"The third year there were thirty.

"And the number has gone on increasing, so that at present there are eighty non-communicants." After

mass, a mischievous peasant approached the speaker, and said, in a low voice:—"Monsieur le Curé, take my advice, and don't make so much stir about this matter. According to your own testimony, we were in a satisfactory condition when you took charge of us, so that we must have deteriorated under your *reign*." . . .

Neither should such commonplace and infelicitous remarks as the following be made:—"Faith is departing from among men. . . . Hell is let loose on earth; . . . everybody is abandoning religion;" . . . for observations like these only tend to induce others to abandon it; and the people will hardly feel disposed to practise a religion which the rest of the world is alleged to be giving up. They would rather prefer being lost with the multitude.

On the contrary, you should say something to this effect,—"Go to! faith is not extinct, for there are many godly men to be found in all ranks of society. You would be convinced of this if you only knew what takes place in our large towns, where numbers of the young, the rich, and the learned belonging to the higher classes, and others occupying distinguished positions, may be seen devoutly frequenting the services of the Church, partaking of the holy communion, visiting the poor, and practising confession with the docility of little children. Moreover, what exemplary women there are amongst us!" . . . You might then add:—"Brethren, we should

strive to imitate such men, and should not allow ourselves to be outdone by them." Representations like these will induce the people to think more highly of religion, and will make it more attractive to them.

We have already discussed the most appropriate method of warning the people against the bad example and pernicious talk of those who affect infidelity; but a few additional remarks may not be out of place here.

In general, we should not evince any fear of such antagonism, nor attach much importance to it. We should rather cause the impression to be produced that God having bestowed mind and talent upon mankind, is a proof that He can be in no dread of those endowments.

Above all, we should lay great stress on such reflections as these:—that those who call themselves unbelievers are, in fact, nothing of the kind, and are better than their words would imply; although, perchance, they might not be greatly disappointed if they could attain to infidelity; that they have as good reason for fearing hell as others have of being in dread of the police; and that by dint of repeating that they are unbelievers, they have been led to imagine that they are so in reality.

You might liken them to some of those old soldiers of the Empire, who, from having travelled a good deal in foreign countries, are generally allowed the licence of embellishing and even of inventing a little. As

everybody knows, they make free use of the privilege, and concoct a number of tales wherein they themselves are made to play a prominent part. These they repeat incessantly, until at length they succeed in persuading themselves that such stories are true, and that the incidents actually occurred as they have narrated them. . . . It is the same with those who wish to pass themselves off as unbelievers. Hence we should not allow ourselves to be moved by their words; for at heart they are better men and nearer to God than is thought, and you should insist on the duty of praying for them. If you pursue this course, none will be hurt or offended, and the wives, daughters, or mothers of these pretended unbelievers will return home from your sermons happier at the thought that all hope for those whom they love is not wholly lost.

The sterner the truths which you have to set forth, the more should tact and kindliness be brought into play, that the souls of the hearers be not depressed. This, however, is a very common error. We are terrible in the pulpit; we thunder and storm there; whereas in the confessional we are gentle and paternal. That was all well enough in times of faith; but an entirely different course is called for nowadays, otherwise you will estrange the hearts of your people. Be paternal in the pulpit, be paternal in the confessional as well; but at the same time uncompromising in your principles. There are many things which terrify

at a distance, but which, nevertheless, are readily assented to in the familiar intercourse of the confessional.

We sometimes hear such language as this, uttered in a tone of great self-conceit, after a long tirade or vehement declamation :—"I have driven them into a corner. I have now fairly crushed them." You have crushed them, have you? So much the worse, for in so doing you have altogether misapprehended your duty. God has not called you to crush men, but to raise and save them. Moreover, there is much cause to fear that those whom you have crushed will not run the less eagerly in the way of evil.

Hence all strong admonitions should be tempered with such deprecations as these :—"Brethren, why am I constrained to tell you these stern truths? You will pardon me for doing so, because it is my duty. It pains me as much as it does you to have to say them." Or, something to this effect :—"If I wished to pain you, or if it was not rather my heart's desire to spare you, or if I did not love you, I might inflict on you the chastisement of irony and defeat; I might say this or that, and speak truly and justly. But no; I leave you to your own consciences, which will tell you of your faults and failings more forcibly than I can. For my part, I prefer holding out a hand to you, I prefer to pity, to save you." . . .

We must become the servants of all. . . . That was the course pursued by Saint John Chrysostom. "A man," says he, "who is only bound to serve one

master, and to submit to one opinion only, may discharge his duty without trouble; but I have an infinity of masters, being called to serve an immense people who hold many different views. Not that I bear this servitude with any sort of impatience, nor that by the present discourse I would defend myself against the authority which you exercise over me in the capacity of masters. God forbid that I should entertain such a thought! On the contrary, nothing is so glorious to me as this servitude of love."

The same feelings ought to pervade the heart of every Christian priest, who should be able to say as St. Paul did to the Corinthians :—"Out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you."

You become aware, for instance, of a prevailing disposition to ill-will, and have cause to apprehend the ridicule of certain parties. Under these circumstances, throw yourself into the hands of your audience; make them your judge, and rest assured you will be treated with indulgence. As Saint Augustine has said :—"If you fear God, cast yourself into His arms and then His hands cannot strike you." In like manner, if you fear the wit and ridicule of the French people, throw yourself into their hearts, and then the sallies of their tongues will fail to reach you."

There are certain thoughts and expressions which have a great hold on the French mind, such as pro-

gress, liberty, enlightenment. These you should never meddle with unless absolutely obliged. We ought to respect even the illusions of our brethren, when they do nobody any harm. When we are forced to combat them, it should be done with courtesy, with gentle irony, or with profound ability. We, too, may speak of enlightenment, of progress, and of liberty, and point out that they can only be effectually attained through the instrumentality of religion. . . .

Matters have undoubtedly improved on this score; proving that if we correct our own errors, the effect will not be lost upon others. We are now far removed from the time when nothing but the future was talked of,—the philosophy of the future, the happiness of the future,—when it used to be said that the time was big with the future, big with a new philosophy; nay, even with a new religion; whereas, in truth, it was big with nothing but misery, as the event fully proved. . . .

We must not assail these delusions directly, nor imitate the bold preacher who is reported to have said—"So we are supposed to be living in the era of light! If so, then it is the devil who holds the candle." On the contrary, you should enter into the current of the ideas of the age, and strive vigorously to turn it in favour of religion, by taking advantage of prevailing errors and delusions to edify your hearers.

One of the lectures of the Rev. Père Ventura supplies a fine model of this style of preaching; which but for the sacredness of the place where it was

delivered, would undoubtedly have elicited roars of applause. He had been showing that the attempt to introduce German philosophy into France was a great mistake, inasmuch as it was altogether unsuited to the positive, sensible, and Christian mind of the French people. He wound up as follows:—"Frenchmen, it is your bane that you do not value yourselves as you ought, that you wish to imitate foreigners; whereas you are rich enough in resources of your own. Last century you imitated English politics and were not very successful. Why do you now wish to borrow a philosophy from Protestant Germany? Frenchmen, be yourselves. . . . What! are you not rich enough in mind, in your wonderful talent for comparison and for development, and in your extreme quickness at deducing consequences from the most remote premises? Not rich enough in the truth which eighteen centuries of Christianity have poured into your bosoms, and to which you owe your civilization and grandeur? Frenchmen, forbear aping others; you have only to be yourselves in order to be great." (Prolonged sensation.)

We should become all things to all men, without ever being rude; being always simple, natural, true, and upright. These are qualities admired alike by all; by the little, and especially by the great. . . .

The wealthy residents in towns frequently go to spend a part of the fine season in the country, where the curé, in order to exalt religion in their eyes—and

the pastor a little as well—thinks himself called upon to be at the expense of some grand phrases and flights of fancy. Now, such a course is neither adroit nor apostolic. As to grand phrases, the visitors hear enough of them in the towns. Besides, they may judge that you have talked at them, and may be offended. Moreover, it is not at all unlikely that they may think you have mistaken your profession. . . . Instead of acting in this way, do not seem to be aware of their presence, but speak boldly to your people in your usual style. Avail yourself, nevertheless, of any fitting occasion to tell them some useful truths; to draw their attention to some striking parable, like that of the poor man with the ewe lamb and the prophet Nathan, which may afford you a good opportunity of reaching the rich over the shoulders of the peasant. Be careful, however, always to do this in a kindly manner; both rich and poor will then be more satisfied with you, and God Himself will concur in the same opinion.

Remember that you have a difficult part to play in a small town. There, you may not say all that may be said in a large city. There, the most paltry things assume huge proportions. One of our best preachers entirely failed of success through having omitted to repeat the *Ave Maria* after the exordium, and for not having allowed his audience time to cough, to expectorate, and to take breath. It is a wonder that he escaped without having his orthodoxy suspected.

Moreover, the residents in small towns are excessively fond of finely-turned phrases, rhetorical displays, and pomposity. They call such rodomontade poetry, and think it sublime. You may adopt it occasionally by way of accompaniment. Nevertheless, don't be led into the delusion that any essays in that style will prevent the *sturdy bourgeois* from slandering his neighbour, from cheating him if he can, and from doing many other things of a similar kind.

Good manners have great weight in France, and many things are excused in him who says them cleverly.

A celebrated preacher was expected to preach a charity sermon in one of the Paris churches. A crowded audience had already assembled, when, to their surprise and disappointment, they saw the incumbent enter the pulpit, and heard him announce that, owing to the sudden indisposition of the eminent preacher, he was obliged to supply his place. Thereat the congregation rose and began to leave the church. Meanwhile the incumbent, seeing the crowd on the move, and the anticipated collection disappearing with them, suddenly arrested them with a *bon mot.* "My brethren," said he, "when everybody has left the church, I will begin." This so delighted the audience that they remained where they were; the incumbent preached an excellent sermon, and the collection was most liberal.

We should endeavour to acquire and practise all the breeding and politeness of good society, with sincerity superadded. By birth, we are for the most part children of the people; that is neither a fault nor a disgrace; it forms an additional resemblance between ourselves and the Apostles. But our primary education was neglected, and we should fill up the gap by retaking from the world those forms which it has borrowed from Christianity, and fill them up with the substance. Then we shall be powerful men.

The present age has given us a great model of this tact, kindliness, and urbanity of speech in the person of the Cardinal de Cheverus.

"He generally spoke," says M. Hamon,* "with such tact and moderation, and so much to the purpose, that, far from offending any one, his audience always went away gratified. Some were convinced, others were staggered, and all disabused more or less of their prejudices. When he addressed persons of a different communion, his kind and affectionate words were the utterances of a heart overflowing with benevolence and charity. He made his audience feel by the accents of his voice and his whole deportment that it was a friend who was addressing them; not merely a sincere, but a tender and devoted friend, who wished them all possible good; and this persuasion, by disposing them to welcome his words, opened the way for him to their hearts.

* *Histoire du Cardinal de Cheverus.*

"His usual course was this: he first stated the question clearly, expounding carefully the true doctrine of the Church; eliminating therefrom all the erroneous interpretations, wherewith heretics have travestied it in order that they might decry it. He then adduced his proofs in a form so simple and natural, combining them with reasons so completely within the reach of ordinary intelligences, that no effort of the mind was required to feel their force. He adhered above all to those proofs which speak to the heart; setting forth all that is lovely and affecting, noble and excellent in the Catholic creed. It is almost unnecessary to add that his efforts were often crowned with deserved success."

But the exercise of tact and kindliness on our part, is specially called for in times of public commotion, when men's minds are disturbed and their passions inflamed. Under such circumstances, we should endeavour to be perfectly self-possessed ourselves, in order that we may be the better able to control others.

Before all, we should be just. The people, on their part, have an exquisite sense of justice. In depicting their faults or their excesses, abstain from all exaggeration; rather say too little than too much, and they will accuse themselves unsparingly. Outstep the limits of truth, and they will rebel, and you will forfeit all your influence over them. Further, take pains to explain to them in detail how matters

stand; show them that you are not an enemy, but a sincere friend and adviser, and they will resign themselves, even to suffering.

A great orator has left on record a perfect model of this style of address. He is so little known that I cannot resist the desire of quoting him. Some time prior to the Revolution of '89, the dearness of bread had excited public indignation at Marseilles, excesses had been committed, and still greater outrages were apprehended.

Mirabeau caused a notice, containing the following passages, to be put up on all the walls of the town :—

"My good friends, I am about to tell you what I think of the occurrences which have taken place in this superb city during the last few days. Listen to me: I shall not deceive you; my only wish is to be of use to you.

"Every one of you desires what is right, for you are all honest people; but every one does not know how he ought to act. A man is often deceived, even with respect to his own interests.

"You complain chiefly of two things: of the price of bread and the price of meat.

"Let us consider the subject of the bread first; other matters will come after.

"Bread is the most indispensable article of food, and there are two requisites regarding it: first, that there should be an adequate supply; and, secondly, that it should not be too dear.

"Well, my good friends, I have some cheering news to tell you. There is no deficiency of wheat at the present moment. There are 50,000 loads in the city, which will furnish bread for three months and twelve days. But, my good friends, that is not all; your administrators and the merchants still expect a large additional supply. . . .

"Be calm, therefore; be perfectly calm. Thank Providence for giving you what others are deprived of.

"You have heard it reported, and you yourselves know, that the seasons generally have been bad throughout the country. The people have to suffer elsewhere much more than you do here; yet they bear it patiently.

"I trust, therefore, that you will be contented and quiet, and that your example may promote peace on all sides. Then, my good friends, it will be said everywhere: The Marseillaise are a brave people. The King will hear it—that excellent King whom we should not afflict, whom we unceasingly invoke—even he will hear of it, and will esteem and love you the more."

As might have been expected, this address produced the happiest results. The people do not, cannot resist such appeals, unless some mischievous demagogue interferes to rekindle their passions.

Lastly, I must say a few words on a subject which should be candidly explained to the people. I allude to the money taken for the use of chairs in our

churches, and the difference which exists in the celebration of marriages and funerals for the rich and the poor. This is a matter which causes great estrangement from religion, and he who is not aware of the fact shows his ignorance of the feelings prevailing among the people. It is desirable that all should be set right on this point, both rich and poor; even the most pious amongst us. Faith is no longer large enough to comprehend these exigencies, and there is a wide-spread suspicion abroad that the Church is following the ruling passion of the multitude—love of money. Besides, the people entertain strong views on the subject of equality, and expect it in matters of religion, if they do not meet with it anywhere else.

Hence it is not uncommon to hear reflections such as the following among the operatives of our workshops:—"Religion nowadays is no longer the religion of the Gospel. The Gospel loves and prefers the people; but religion as practised at present prefers the rich and encourages felons.

"Take, for example, two men of humble parentage. The one remains a workman and maintains his integrity all his life; he toils on and dies poor. The other becomes rich by very questionable means, defrauds right and left, and dies wealthy. He is then placed in the centre of the church, and surrounded with burning tapers and chanting priests. . . . The poor devil of a workman, on the contrary, who has been upright all his life, is borne in the rear

of the incumbent, accompanied by two or three priests, with as many tapers, and is then pitched into a corner. . . . And you would have me believe that this is the religion of Christ? It is no such thing; it is the religion of the priests: it is the religion of money. . . ."

Arguments like these have a powerful effect on persons who are incapable of sober reflection, and who scarcely ever look beyond the present state of existence. They harrow up the popular instincts; and with the people instinct is everything. The man who secures the command over their instincts may do anything with them; he who fails in that respect cannot manage them at all. . . . It is most desirable, then, that the inequality complained of should be kindly and frankly explained.

In doing so, we might say something to the following effect:—"Dear friends, this subject is quite as painful to us as it can be to you; but you are aware that there are some stern necessities in life. The Church is poor nowadays, and yet has many expenses to meet. The sacred fabrics must be maintained, the wages of employés paid, suitable furniture provided, and we ourselves, brethren, even we, the clergy, must live. . . . Would you like us to go begging our bread? Say, would you wish that? Certainly not; for if you knew we were in need, you would be the first to succour us, even though you had to stint yourselves. Moreover, it is our duty to visit

the poor; and would you condemn us to the greatest possible misery, that of witnessing want without being able to relieve it? Say, would you inflict such torture upon us? Well, then, brethren, the money in question goes to defray these expenses, to give us bread, and to enable us to alleviate the necessities of the poor.

"Instead of complaining, therefore, be content that the weddings and burials of the wealthy should be made to provide for these requisites. Moreover, brethren, let us lift up our souls and look beyond the present life. Thank God, we are not destined to spend all our existence on earth. You know full well that this life is not all our life. There is another to follow, where all the inequalities which we see here will be perfectly adjusted, and when every one shall receive according to his works and not according to his good fortune. Why, then, attach so much importance to these matters? Surely you do not think that God troubles Himself about them; that He counts the number of tapers, or carpets, or chairs? . . . God looks to see whether a man has been upright and honest, faithfully discharging his duties as a citizen and a Christian. Be all that, my brethren, and He will not fail to give you a blissful abode in heaven; which will be far better than the most magnificent place in the church, either at your wedding or your funeral."

CHAPTER VIII.

INTEREST, EMOTION, AND ANIMATION.

We should endeavour to excite Interest by Thoughts, by Sallies or Epigrams, by Studies of Men and Manners—The Truth should be animated—The Père Ravignan—The Père Lacordaire—The Heart is too often absent.

WE remarked in a former chapter that the preaching of the Divine word, especially on Sundays, should be to the people, wearied with the toil and cares of the week, a rest, a joy; or, as the Scripture says, a refreshment. . . . It should be to them what a spring of water surrounded with verdure is to our soldiers worn out with marching, and scorched by the sun and burning sands of Africa.

Under its breath, the souls of men should dilate, blossom, as it were, and feel less unhappy; for is not the Gospel glad tidings? Was it not proclaimed at the Nativity of Christ:—"I bring you glad tidings of great joy?"

Christian pulpit instruction should be a sort of paternal intercourse enlivened with faith and charity —a family meeting where the different members come

to talk over their labours and their trials, their fears and their hopes, and the bounty of that Father who is in Heaven, in such a way that each may go away benefited and less unhappy, saying within himself :— "I feel all the better now. The words of the preacher have cheered me. Why did he not speak a little longer? While he spoke, my soul was on fire."— "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?"

Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. The sermon is looked upon as something cold, official, and tedious; or merely as a necessary accompaniment of the service. It is thought wearisome to listen to, but must needs be endured for the sake of example. Generally speaking, moreover, the greater part of the faithful are absent, and the majority of the pious souls present consists of females. These place themselves as much at their ease as possible on a couple of chairs, and resign themselves to undergo the sermon. When it is over, they remark that it was either a good or an indifferent discourse, and then depart absolutely as they came; none feeling in the least bound to practise what has been enjoined.

Preaching, indeed, is a sorry trade. The preacher studies and meditates on his subject, composes his sermon, and then commits it to memory. What a task! He then goes into the pulpit, and is grieved to perceive that the minds of his audience are abstracted— that they look like persons who are being bored; so

much so, that he is glad if even by a nod of assent they do not prove that they have been doing anything else rather than listening to him. For the sermon is undoubtedly regarded in the light of an infliction; a species of forced labour. When the faithful learn that there is to be no sermon, they hail the announcement with pleasure, and seem to say with great glee :—"Another sermon got over!" Hence one frequently hears the remark :—"I shall not go to such a mass because there is preaching there." Truly, all this is sad, very sad, as regards the preaching of the Divine word.

But who is to blame, ourselves or the faithful? In the first place, it is quite certain that in France there is a decided distaste for anything serious, or that requires attention and mental effort. Nothing is cared for nowadays but what is amusing; hence the most highly remunerated people amongst us are those who cater for the amusement of others, some of whom make fabulous incomes. How to be amused is, in fact, the great question of the day, insomuch that you hear the remark on all sides :—"I will not go there again, for the entertainment did not amuse me."

The malady of *ennui* pervades the social atmosphere and all who move in it, while anything serious suggests wearisomeness and disgust. This state of mind is the result of excessive selfishness. For three-fourths of their time, men are bored about themselves personally. They then feel the want of some excite-

ment to get rid of the incubus, and generally resort to whatever is romantic in search of it.

Again, there is scarcely any prevailing love of the truth; on the contrary, it is rather dreaded, and men manifest a strange pusillanimity when confronted with it. Whenever a stern truth is addressed to others, they readily applaud, and think it quite right that this and that vice should be strongly reprehended; but when it is brought home to themselves, they frown, question the propriety of the censure, and can see no harm in their own delinquencies. Besides which, there is a universal tendency to pass judgment on everything sacred and profane, and a sermon is criticized as if it were nothing more than an ordinary literary production. . . .

These are shortcomings on the part of the congregation, but are they wholly responsible for them? The blame is sometimes cast on the world, on the absorbing passion for frivolity, and on the literature of the day; but may there not be a little fault elsewhere? It is our duty to look into this subject; and as we are called upon to proclaim the truth to others, it behoves us to administer it in the first place to ourselves. This will be a real charity; the more so, because if we are not told it to our faces, we may rest assured that it will be repeated with additions behind our backs.

I hasten, then, to state it. There is a large amount of talent in Paris, and no lack of clergymen who know how to draw, to interest, and to direct an

audience. In the provinces, too, how many preachers are there, who, though little known, do a vast amount of good! Christian eloquence is still one of the glories, one of the purest and most indisputable glories of France. As a witty writer has said:—"God has evidently made France His spoilt child. The misfortune is that the child does not always profit by the parent's indulgence." Unquestionably, there are still apostolic preachers amongst us, whose words are effectual in stirring up and saving the souls of men; nevertheless, is it not equally true, that our usual style of preaching is deficient in interest and perspicuity, is too monotonous and didactic, is made up of a misuse of reasoning and rhetorical phraseology, is wanting in heart and soul, and, above all, in that tone of conviction which lends to speech its paramount power? . . .

In the first place, we must interest our hearers; for that is an indispensable condition of benefiting them. . . . People generally require to be interested. They may be rather exacting on that point: it may be a weakness on their part; but what is to be done? Must we not become all things to all men? Must we not take them as they are? It is constantly being repeated that society is unsound; then, should we not overlook some things in those who are ailing? After all, the question is not to discover whether they are right or wrong. The vital question is to save them, and how to get them to listen to us, and to cause Gospel truth to reach their ears, their minds, and their

hearts to that end. Why should we take so much trouble in preparing sermons if they are not to be listened to? In that case, it becomes nothing more than a disheartening, profitless labour. As somebody once remarked:—"They teach me to compose magnificent sermons. I only wish they would also teach me how to make people come and hear them."

Our aim then should be to secure a hearing. To attain that, we must first excite interest . . .

There are different ways of doing this. We may interest our hearers by well-digested studies of men and manners, conveyed in various styles of unsophisticated and sympathetic language; by spirited sallies; by metaphors drawn from the incidents of every-day life; and by heart-stirring impulses and emotions . . .

In the first place, in order to interest an audience you must never lose sight of them, but keep them always in your wake. They should be made to think and feel with you, and even to anticipate or divine your train of thought; for that will gratify them. At other times, prepare a surprise for them, and that too will please them.

When you perceive that the attention of your hearers is flagging, it may be stimulated by a lively speech or sally; such as shall gladden their hearts, and draw from them that gentle smile which bespeaks approving assent. Frenchmen are delighted with this style of address; and surely there is nothing to urge against it. With so many depressing cares to battle

with, one should rejoice to see them inspirited a little under the breath of the Divine word. Moreover, it may be made a useful medium for communicating some wholesome truths.

Sallies of this kind are greatly relished by the French people, even when directed against themselves.

All great orators have employed them. Saint Chrysostom himself, always so grave and dignified, did not disdain to use them. He thus wittily derides the vanity of the male sex of his time:—"Look at that young man. He walks delicately on the tips of his toes for fear of soiling his shoes. My friend, if you dread the mud so much on account of your shoes, put them on your head and they will be safe."

In another place he assails the vanity of the women. "Why are you so proud of your fine clothes? You reply: 'Only look at this stuff and see how beautiful it is: touch it, and feel how silky it is.' True; but that is no merit of yours. 'But how exquisitely this dress fits me!' True, again, but the merit of that is due to the sempstress."

"Alas! for human weakness," he exclaimed; "it takes the produce of a plant, an animal, or a vile insect, bedizens itself therewith, then goes abroad and asks the world's admiration, saying: Look at me, for I am worth something to-day."

All our great modern orators, both of the tribune and pulpit, abound in trenchant sallies; which almost

always carry conviction, because they are universally understood.

"France," says M. de Falloux, "repels equally those men who can do every thing, and those who can do nothing."

The Rev. Père Lacordaire excels in epigrams of this kind. He has a peculiar talent in that line, and has succeeded in winning over many of his hearers by his pithy humour.

One day his object was to show that rationalism does not possess that charity which distinguishes the Christian faith and ministry. Instead of entering into a long dissertation on the subject, he expressed himself thus :—

"I shall only say a few words about rationalism in connection with the topic before us. I have never heard of a rationalist having been beaten by the Cochin-Chinese. Minds like theirs are too highly polished and too ingenious to risk encountering such distinction in behalf of the truth. It will, therefore, be time enough to trouble ourselves about them, when the next vacancy occurs in the Academy. We are too well bred to offer them any thing else than a laurel branch, which they unquestionably deserve."

On another occasion he remarked with a smile, addressing those who affected unbelief :—"Yes, sirs, I admit that you have mind, that you have plenty of mind ; but know this, that God has endowed you with it—a clear proof that He entertains no fear of it."

Even the Rev. Père Ravignan, who is generally so austere, ever and anon adopts a similar style.

One day, in recapitulating the philosophical errors of the present time, he remarked :—"Rationalism is another error, and has the largest following. It comprises a class of thinkers who are devoid of faith ; men who are eternally seeking but never find ; jaded in their search by the oscillations of doubt, the sport of grand and pretty phrases. According to them, the day is at length about to dawn ; the solution of all questions is at hand. If, by any chance, we may have still to wait a long time for it. . . . in that case, you must exercise patience ; the religion of the future will come at last ;" [then, taking off his cap and bowing ironically, he added,] "for which, of course, we are much obliged."

Similar points are to be met with throughout the discourses of M. Lecourtier. Addressing wives, he says :—"Do not play the master at home. I know of no one so ridiculous as the wife who does so, unless it be the husband who obeys her." Sallies like these are treasured up, and serve to recall to memory a whole discourse. Moreover, they enlarge the heart and dispose it to subsequent nobler impulses . .

"To do children good," says a well-known writer, "they must be interested : they must be made to laugh, to cry, and then sent away happy." Are not the people still children ? Are we not all children still, in more than one respect ?

Let it not be supposed that in what has been said above, it is intended that any person whatever should be ridiculed or held up to contempt. On the contrary, irony should never be employed except against prejudices, vices, and crimes.

Another way of exciting interest is by lively, skilful, witty, and delicate sketches of men and manners. . . . The Frenchman is fond of being spoken to about himself, about his occupations, his characteristics, his trials, even his foibles and caprices. This fact is too much lost sight of. We descant on the Hebrews, the Jews, the Egyptians, Midianites, Philistines, and other nations of the past. Set all that aside, and speak more freely of the Gospel and Frenchmen, and of Frenchmen and the Gospel; of Frenchmen of the present age, of their virtues and vices. Do this, and you will not fail to interest your hearers: you will interest them in spite of themselves.

M. Lecourtier transcends in such portraiture. Hence, as before remarked, his sermons always attract crowded audiences; and he is never listened to with more attention than when delineating the inner history of a man or woman of the 19th century. Occasionally some are offended, and declare that they will not come to hear him again; but they seldom keep their word, for they find his discourses so interesting that they cannot stay away.

Humility is not our forte; on the contrary, we are

all very fond of engaging the attention of others. Indeed, we prefer ill-usage to neglect; an instance of which is afforded by a letter addressed to a celebrated man by an obscure author, wherein he wrote :— "I entreat you to be kind enough to refute me, and, if need be, to abuse me, for that will bring me into notice."

Studies of men and manners are well-timed everywhere. They are understood by and interest all, because they draw forth a repetition of the speech made by the woman of Samaria :—"I have seen a man who hath told me all things that ever I did."

Nevertheless, we must not stop there. After depicting what is evil, we must combat, and overcome, and drive it away by the force of logic, and by the impulses of thought and heart combined. In this, also, we may find it easy to excite interest.

Every truth should be proved. The French mind is pre-eminently logical; but it is also prompt and quick, and likes neither that which is long, nor that which is heavy; nor that which affirms without proving, nor yet that which proves too much.

State your principles, therefore, in a clear and concise form, and then demonstrate them in prompt and vigorous language; making your audience feel from the outset that you are master of the situation; thereby precluding the possibility of resistance on the part of the ingenuous or even of the disingenuous, and that while listening to you they may be led to

repeat the remark of the great Condé when he saw Bourdaloue ascending the pulpit :—"Attention ! voilà l'ennemi."

Such, however, is far from being the case with ourselves. . . . The faithful are fed with nothing but frigid, precise, dogmatic, and even unintelligible discourses, which are supposed to convey solid instruction. But what if it be so, if the discourses are neither listened to nor understood ? Dry bread is also solid, yet nobody likes it only, any more than you, do yourself ; and if you provide nothing but such food at your table, rest assured that you will find but few guests.

We should animate or impassion reason itself. Demosthenes did this, and so did all great orators. The Rev. Père Ravignan, whose reasoning is always so forcible and logical, gives sensation and life to his arguments in a masterly manner.

In his sermon on the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, after demonstrating that we must admit the mystery of the Incarnation or else submit to many other mysteries, he subjoins :—"But the objection is raised that a mystery is inexplicable, insolvable. So be it ; nevertheless not to admit it, is to throw everything into the most frightful chaos. . . . Then is Christianity false ; the world believes what is false ; has been converted, regenerated, civilized, by what is false ; there is falsehood in the faith, in the love, and in all the other inspirations of the Christian religion ;

falsehood in all the blessings which have been conferred upon humanity in the name of God the Redeemer; falsehood in the heroism of innumerable martyrs; falsehood in all the master-minds who have adorned Christianity; falsehood in the whole chain of science, zeal, devotion, and superhuman virtues; falsehood in the entire series of the ages of the Church, in all its monuments, in all its testimonies; falsehood in the Catholic priesthood and in the sacred ministry of all centuries; falsehood in the happiness springing from faith and a pure conscience; falsehood in the pulpit; falsehood on my lips and in my heart. What! does your light and disdainful tongue find a lesser mystery in all these consequences which necessarily result from your principles? ME THEY TERRIFY."

We should, moreover, attempt in some way to put the truth into action, making it to come and go, to speak, question, and reply; and should always keep the scene so fully occupied that the minds of the audience may not be diverted therefrom for an instant. In this respect also, the Rev. Père Lacordaire supplies us with an excellent model.

In his discourse on the *Intellectual Society founded by the Church*, he points out the efforts which have been made by the world to destroy the immutability of her doctrine, in a style truly dramatic:—"When everything else on earth is subject to change, what a weighty prerogative must the possession by others of an unchangeable doctrine be in the estimation of

those who do not themselves possess it! A doctrine which some feeble old men, in a place called the Vatican, keep secure under the key of their cabinet, and which, without any other safeguard, has resisted the progress of time, the conceits of sages, the machinations of sovereigns, the downfall of empires, and maintained throughout its unity and identity. A standing miracle this, and a claim which all ages, jealous of a glory which disdained theirs, have attempted to gainsay and silence. One after another they have approached the Vatican, and knocked at the gate with buskin or boot. Whereat Doctrine has come forth under the form of a feeble and decrepit septuagenarian, and has asked :—

"'What do you want of me?'

"'Change.'

"'I change not.'

"'But everything in the world has changed. Astronomy has changed; philosophy has changed; empire has changed; why are you always the same?'

"'Because I come from God, and God is always the same.'

"'But know this, that we are masters. We have a million of men under arms, we will draw the sword, and the sword which demolishes thrones may easily be made to behead an old man like yourself, and to tear into fragments the leaves of a book.'

"'Attempt it. Blood is the aroma which gives me new youth.'

"'Well, then, accept half of my purple; join in a sacrifice to peace, and let us go shares.'

"'Keep thy purple, O Cæsar; to-morrow we will bury you in it, and will chant over you the *Alleluia* and *De profundis*, which never change.'

This is something which everybody can understand, and which will always be listened to with pleasure, and with profit to the truth.

But further: It is not enough to speak to the mind. That goes a very little way, however powerful our speech may be; for the mind is merely the vestibule of the soul. We must penetrate to the sanctuary of the temple, namely, to the heart. The heart is nearly the whole man, and we are hardly anything apart from the heart. It is the heart which believes—"with the heart man believeth"—and it is the heart which begets virtues. Moreover, the heart is what God demands from us.

But in order to speak to the heart, we must have a heart ourselves, and make use of it too. Now, it is questionable in these days whether many preachers have a heart. No one can perceive it in them; so great is the care which they take not to expose even a corner of it, lest by so doing they might derange the massive chain of their arguments. And, besides, who knows but that it might subject them to the charge of being deficient in dignity. In fact, the heart appears to have come down from the pulpit, and fears to occupy it again . . . it is no longer

allowed to play a part there, lest it might prove disconcerting. It is now regarded with suspicion, and God must have been mistaken when he said :— "My son, give me thine heart." The general notion seems to be, that nothing more is required in order to do men good than clearly or obscurely to demonstrate the truth to them. But knowing and doing are as widely apart as heaven and earth, and the distance between the two can only be surmounted by the heart. . . . Nothing, indeed, profits an audience so much; nothing is so successful as the windings, the boundings of the heart, even when introduced in the middle of an argument.

All those who heard the discourse of Père Ventura on the *Philosophical Reason of Modern Times*, will recall to mind the profound and sympathetic impression which he produced when, after having spoken of a well-known philosopher, he added :—"But, after all, he was endowed with a rare intellect, a genial heart, and a noble disposition. Deceived and led astray as he had been by the false doctrines of the day, he nevertheless eventually recognized and avowed that he had made a sad bargain when he exchanged the tenets of the faith for the vain conceptions of science. Some moments before death, he shed tears over his beloved daughter, who had just partaken of the holy communion for the first time. Let me believe that his avowal and tears were acts of faith, of repentance, and of love, which availed towards his salvation at

the hands of a merciful God. Let me, I say, believe this; for it is a consolation to me to believe that my brethren have found again, even in death, that grace which I hope to find myself with a benevolent God."

Yes, if we appealed to the heart we should frequently discover how good, true, and sincere it is, and how little is required to change it:—often nothing more than a word, a reminiscence, a tear, a look, a sigh. And yet how sadly has this easy and effectual means been neglected! . . . Everybody does not understand a fine dissertation, but everybody does understand a good sentiment.

To sum up: the sermon should be interesting, animated, vivifying; ten years of a lifetime should be comprised in a sermon of thirty minutes' duration. Speak to the mind, to the good sense, to the imagination, to the hearts of men, in words that breathe and thoughts that burn; laying hold of them, as it were, by whatever stirs the lively and profound emotions of the soul: by grief and by joy, by hatred and by love, by tears and by consolations, by hell and by heaven. Let your speech be always powerful and triumphant. Whatever you attempt, do well. If you reason, let your reasoning be sharp, to the point, and decisive. If you exercise charity, let it flow in broad streams, that it may inundate and cheer all around. If you give vent to anger, let it escape in glowing and irresistible sallies. If you are ever at a loss what other influence to invoke, then appeal to

pity. After such outbursts, there should be intervals of calm to tone down asperities, to smooth to softness any bitterness, and to express regret for having used them; but in reality to make a deeper impression by touching a different chord of the heart. These contrasts of thought and sentiment always produce a powerful effect. M. Berryer is well aware of this, and often avails himself of them with the greatest success.

In the celebrated discussion on the affairs of the East, after having exhibited the humiliation of France, he added:—"Let no more be said upon what has been done; above all, let us never, never again recall the humiliating admissions which have reached us both from London and Constantinople. (Profound sensation.)

"Let that despatch, wherein Lord Palmerston is stated to have said that France would yield, and that the Eastern question would be settled in accordance with the wishes of England, be buried in oblivion. . . . Is there a country whose ambassadors have cognizance of such language, and not only retain their posts, but become ministers? (Bravo, bravo!) That country is certainly not France. (Renewed applause.) England cannot have said so. Those who saw us even at Waterloo could not say such a thing. . . ."

But after this suspension of arms, we must return to the charge with redoubled nerve and bravery, implanting our weapon in the heart, and turning it

again and again within the wound. In other words, our train of thought should be still more energetic, our sentiments more powerful; embodied sometimes in a dramatic or tragic form, wherein truth and error are brought together in a fierce and obstinate hand-to-hand struggle; truth being made to overthrow error and to triumph over vice, and then to raise the erring and the transgressor, to embrace them, and to bear them away with herself to virtue, to happiness, and to heaven. . . .

The following extract from M. de Cormenin furnishes an admirable summary of the foregoing chapter:—

"Select with a quick and confident instinct, from among the methods available to you, the method of the day; which may not be the most solid, but which, considering the disposition of men's minds, the nature of the matter in hand, and the peculiarity of concomitant circumstances, is the best adapted for making an impression upon your audience.

"Take strong hold of their attention. Stir up their pity or indignation, their sympathies or their antipathies, or their pride. Appear to be animated by their breath, all the while that you are communicating yours to them. When you have, in some degree, detached their souls from their bodies, and they come and group themselves of their own accord at the foot of the pulpit, riveted beneath the influence of your glance, then do not dally with them, for they are yours; your soul

having, as may be truly said, passed into theirs. Look now how they follow its ebb and flow! how they will as you will! how they act as you act! But persist, give no rest; press your discourse home, and you will soon see all bosoms panting because yours pants; all eyes kindling because yours emit flame, or filling with tears because you grow tender. You will see all the hearers hanging on your lips through the attractions of persuasion; or, rather, you will see nothing, for you yourself will be under the spell of your own emotion; you will bend, you will succumb, under your own genius, and you will be the more eloquent the less effort you make to appear so.

"Be clear, exact, concise, impartial.

"Do not attempt to say everything, but what you do say, say well."

CHAPTER IX.

THE POWER AND ACCENT OF CONVICTION.

The Divine Word has always been the first Power in the World—The Gospel still the first of Books—There can be no Christian Eloquence without the Accent of Personal Conviction.

HITHERTO, we may be said to have treated merely of human instrumentality; we must now consider our subject in a higher point of view. Reason, imagination, and sentiment are necessary qualifications to success in our vocation; but we require besides these the power of God, because our aim is to lay hold of and to direct the souls of men. Now, as that mighty genius Bossuet has remarked:—"There is nothing so indomitable as the heart of man. When I see it subdued, I adore." And why? Because he recognized in such submission a superhuman agency.

This power we possess in the Word, which is the power of God; before which every head must bow, and every knee bend, whether on earth, in heaven, or in hell. Armed with the Divine word, our power is immense; only, in order to wield it, we must our-

selves be thoroughly penetrated thereby, and, above all, be able to convince others that we are so. It must be felt, seen, and acknowledged that God is with us.

The Divine word is the foremost power in the world. It has withstood and overcome every other power. . . . It has uttered its voice everywhere: in the catacombs, at the foot of the scaffold, under the axe of the executioner, and within the jaws of wild beasts. It has spoken while the feet of the speakers have been drenched in blood. . . .

During the middle ages, mighty barons, sheltered behind impregnable strongholds, had cast the network of their sway over the whole of France, and silence was imposed on all lips. Nevertheless, on more than one occasion did the Divine word, in the guise of a priest or monk, venture to ascend the steps of those redoubtable fortresses; and its voice alone sufficed to inspire fear in the breasts of men clad in armour of steel.

There was a king in whom power seemed incarnate. That king was Louis XIV. He dared to say:—"L'état, la France, c'est moi." Under his inspiring look, military genius triumphed in war; poetry begat the sublimest conceptions; canvas spoke; marble was animated; and the arts replenished even the gardens of his royal abode with master-pieces of skill.

One Sunday, Louis XIV., surrounded by his court,

took his seat in the chapel at Versailles, when the preacher boldly uttered from the pulpit those terrible words: "Woe to the rich! Woe to the great!" whereat the monarch lowered his eyes, and the courtiers murmured. . . . After the sermon, there was some talk of reprimanding the priest for his temerity; but the King remarked, with a justice which does him honour:—"Gentlemen, the preacher has done his duty; it behoves us now to do ours."

We may recognize herein the power of the Divine word; and it is that same word which is on our lips.

What, indeed, is the word of man even in the mouth of the boldest orator, even when set forth in all the brilliancy of its power, when compared with the Divine word? . . . Much has been said of the force of Mirabeau's famous apostrophe:—"The communes of France have decided on deliberating. We have heard of the designs which have been suggested to the King; and you, who are not allowed to be his organ with the National Assembly—you who possess neither the standing nor the option, nor the right of speaking—go and tell your master that we are here by the power of the people, and that it shall not be wrested from us except at the point of the bayonet."*

This speech has been eulogized as grand, bold, and even audacious; but, good God! what does it amount to? Any priest might do as much, and say something far better, with greater truth and less

* The authenticity of this statement has been questioned.

arrogance; for there is no priest, however poor and humble he may be, who might not say:—"We are here in God's name, and here we intend to remain, and we will speak in spite of guns and bayonets." . . .

But the fact is, we are not adequately convinced of our own power, and of the superiority which we possess over everything around us; for, with nothing else in our hands but that little book which is called the Gospel, we may bring the world to our feet; inasmuch as the Gospel is, and will continue to be, as regards mankind generally, the first of books.

There are not wanting those who taunt us in this style:—"Ye men of a past age, ye retrogrades, follow in the wake of your own age; strive to progress. We, on our part, have been constantly advancing, especially within the last two centuries . . . we have gained ground." . . . To this we are justified in replying:—"Very true; the human mind has developed; you have worked hard; you have stirred up thought; you have filled our libraries with first-rate books; there have been some profound thinkers and sublime geniuses among you; and you have given birth to many admirable ideas. All this we admit; nevertheless, show us a book superior to our Gospel, or one which will even bear comparison with it. Tell us where it is to be found. You talk of progress, and bid us follow you; but it is we who are in advance, and you who are behind. . . . Begin your studies afresh; do something better; and then come to us

again, and we will see. In the meantime, we occupy the foremost place, and are determined to hold it."

Our power, we maintain, is far above that of any earthly weapons; for the Christian preacher is backed by eighteen centuries of learning and virtue, which believed what he declares — by more than ten millions of martyrs, who died to attest the truth of what he proclaims; and, behind all that, he is supported by the mighty voice of God which says to him :—" Speak, and be not afraid, for I am with thee."

It behoves us, therefore, to be thoroughly persuaded of the power which the Divine word confers upon us. But, besides this, we must make our hearers feel that we are so endowed. They must be impressed, while listening to us, that we verily and indeed speak in God's name—that we are not men who have merely cogitated or mused in their studies, and then come forth to propound their own ideas; but that we are commissioned from on high to proclaim to mankind the laws and promises of God, before whom we ourselves profoundly bow. They must read all this in our whole deportment, in our voice, our gestures, and, above all, in our charity. In a word, we must possess *the accent of conviction*, that accent which believes, speaks, arrests, and alarms.

The accent of conviction is made up of a mixture of faith, power, and love combined; the combination forming a characteristic which is at once simple, pious, and grand, redolent of inspiration and sanctity. It

is the power, the life of speech; the *sacred fire*, or what Mirabeau styles *divinity* in eloquence. "I have never heard any one speak," said he, referring to Barnave, "so long, so rapidly, and so well; but there is no divinity in him." The accent of conviction is the magic of speech . . . that which puts argument to silence, withdraws all attention from the preacher, and fixes it solely on what he says; or, rather, on what God says through him.

Unhappily, we are very backward in this respect. There is faith undoubtedly in our souls; but it is not always manifest in our speech. . . . How, then, can we expect to make others believe what we do not seem to them to believe ourselves?

We have to deal with a light, reasoning, and somewhat sceptical world, accustomed to regard every one as merely acting a part . . . and if you do not possess the accent of conviction, it will either suspect you of hypocrisy, or will brand you by admiring how well you ply *the trade*, and how cleverly you play your game.

There is a remark very common nowadays, which is much to be regretted. If one speaks of a preacher, he is immediately asked: "Has he faith?" which means: Does he appear to believe what he says? Should the reply be: "No; . . . but he is a fine speaker;" the rejoinder generally is: "Then I shall not go to listen to him; for I want to hear somebody who has faith." This observation is not intended to imply

any doubt of the inward faith of the preacher, but that he preaches as if he did not believe what he utters.

Let us, however, do the world this justice, that when it meets with the accent of conviction—the bold accent of faith, as Saint Chrysostom calls it,—it is deeply impressed thereby. The preacher who believes and speaks out of that belief, astounds, staggers, and overcomes the gainsayers. A few words uttered with the accent of conviction go much further than many long sermons. How, indeed, can any prevail against one in whom God is felt to dwell? . . . Fine language, talent, imagination, brilliant argumentative powers—all these are common enough amongst us, and we are quite accustomed to them ; but what is rare, what is unlooked-for, what carries everything before it, is the language of a faith and of a heart which seems to echo the voice of God Himself.

Two years ago, the late pious and gallant Captain Marceau was present at a meeting of operatives in Paris, many of whom were unbelievers and wrong-headed men. He felt moved to address them, and the impression which he produced was almost magical. He had never before spoken in public; nevertheless, he did so on the occasion referred to with that accent of conviction and candour which finds its way at once to the heart, overcoming all resistance, and sometimes seeming to take away one's breath.

"My friends," said he, "there are doubtless some among you who are not yet Christians, and who have

no love for religion. I was once as ungodly as you are—perhaps more so; for no one has hated Christianity more cordially than I have done. I am bound, however, to do it this justice, that while I was not a Christian, that is, till I was twenty-three years old, I was unhappy, profoundly unhappy. . . . Up to that period, my friends, I had not lived. No, it was not living . . . I worried myself, or, rather, my passions drew or drove me hither and thither, and carried me away; but I did not live . . . I was a machine . . . but I was not a man. . . ."

Strange to say, scarcely any attention is paid to this accent of conviction, which is the soul of all eloquence; more especially of sacred eloquence. Those destined to proclaim the Divine word are instructed in everything else but this. . . . Hence the language from the pulpit is often cold, monotonous, turgid, stiff, cramped, conventional, perfunctory; savouring of a formal compliment, but of nothing to indicate the effusion of a genial soul, and without any of those felicitous sallies of the heart, those insinuating and familiar tones, as Fénélon calls them, which produce in you almost a Divine impression.

And yet there are many pious priests amongst us, many who are truly men of God. Still, such is the deplorable power of routine, that their piety seems sometimes to abandon them when in the pulpit—the very place where it should be most conspicuous.

Like myself, you have, doubtless, in the course of

your life, often met with one of these estimable priests, full of faith and charity. His countenance alone did you good, and his words cheered you alike in familiar conversation and in the confessional. . . . The same individual occupies the pulpit: you are delighted to see him there, and forthwith set yourself to listen to him with earnest attention; but, alas! you no longer recognize him: he is no longer the same; what he utters is no longer the word of life. You exclaim: "What has become of my model pastor, my saint?" . . . for you hear nothing now but declamation, or a sing-song speech . . . a uniform tone which utters the denunciation: "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire," and the invitation: "Come ye blessed of my Father," in the same strain. . . . You hear what you have heard a hundred times before—a poor man who, with a painful sense of effort, is doing his best to evoke refractory thoughts and phrases, and are almost led to doubt whether he is not acting a part.

This monotony, this dull uniformity, this mannerism must be abandoned, and we must resume our personality —our own minds and hearts—enlarged and inspired by the breath of God; . . . otherwise, by persisting in that dismal tone, that frigidly philosophical style, that finely-spun phraseology, that speech without emphasis, which characterizes the generality of our sermons nowadays, we shall wholly lose our time, our pains, and perchance our souls also. . . .

Can it, indeed, be that we are wanting in a just

sense of our mission, and that we do not adequately estimate the object which those who speak in God's name should have in view? The end of preaching is to bring back the souls of men to the Creator.

In this respect also, it is to be feared that the philosophical spirit, and a tendency to controversy, have turned us aside from our proper aim and the end of all our efforts. Take away the accent of conviction from a sermon, divest it of energetic faith, and what is left thereof to the hearers? Mere sounding phrases, and nothing more.

Now, let me ask, are you aware of the enemies with whom you have to deal, and the difficulties which you have to contend against? The object set before you is to redeem the hearts of men, who in their thirst, their rage for happiness, have given themselves up to the sensual, visible, intoxicating things which surround them. You will have to do battle with the human passions: to say to pride, be abased; to voluptuousness, be accursed; to the love of gold, renounce your avarice and be bountiful . . . and you fancy that you will succeed in the encounter by the use of mere phrases; forgetting, perchance, that those passions can make better phrases than yours. They know how to give them life, and will hurl them at you, glowing with a fire which will speedily devour your cold and meagre speeches. . . . Nothing can restrain and subdue the passions but the inspiration, the power of God. . . .

It is high time that we should resume the accent of conviction in our ministrations. Having that, the soul is perfectly at ease, and, feeling sure of its footing, cherishes the widest benevolence. . . . Why should it be troubled, knowing that it is secure in the Power on which it relies? It is only those powers which doubt their own strength that are suspicious and wavering. And when God is with us, we cannot fail to entertain profound pity for the weaknesses, the prejudices, the profanities, and the false reasonings of humanity.

CHAPTER X.

ACTION.

Action should be: first, true and natural; secondly, concentrated; thirdly, edifying—It should be cultivated—How cultivated by the Society of Jesus—Suggestions.

ACTION is not mere gesture, neither is it motion nor sound. It is the manifestation of the thoughts and sentiments of the soul through the bodily organs. It is the soul which, unable to reveal itself, makes its material exterior the medium of communicating its conceptions of truth and love to the souls of others.

The principle of action should be the heart. . . . Action itself may be in the voice, in gesture, in the face, in the hand, in demeanour generally, and even in silence. . . .

Action plays a conspicuous part in eloquence. We are familiar with what Demosthenes said on the subject. Being asked three times what was the first quality in an orator, he thrice replied:—Action. This is an exaggerated judgment; but Demosthenes probably estimated action in proportion to the pains

which its acquirement had cost him: nevertheless, it is certain that action adds greatly to the clearness, the weight, the impressiveness, and the power of thought. It is the charm of eloquence. Saint François de Sales writes:—"You may utter volumes, and yet if you do not utter them well, it is lost labour. Speak but little, and that little well, and you may effect much."

Only a few are capable of appreciating the intrinsic value of a discourse; whereas all can see whether you speak from an inward sense of the truth —from the heart and from personal conviction.

It is more especially upon the people that action produces a powerful effect; it attracts, it transports them. A preacher who possesses sterling and noble ideas, who has genuine sentiment and true action, is irresistible with them. Such weapons will assuredly do great havoc among them; or, as I should rather say, will save many. They may not always admit their discomfiture; but they will not hesitate to confess that your words are weighty and true, and tell against them.

But in order to be impressive, action must be: first, true and natural; secondly, concentrated; thirdly, edifying. . . .

1. In the first place, the preacher should be himself, and should speak like a man. It is pre-eminently in the pulpit that everything should be genuine; that every accessory should harmonize with

the thoughts; that the eye, the look, and the hand should corroborate what is uttered by the lips.

Strange to say, hardly any attention is paid to this point. Once in the pulpit, it seems to be taken for granted that no effort is required to give the truth distinctness. Words are strung on to words, and any tone of voice is deemed appropriate. . . . The preacher speaks as nobody in the world ever spoke: he bawls, chaunts, or sings without modulation and without feeling. Hence, a malicious wag, on hearing a preacher pronounce those terrible words: "Depart ye cursed!" in a bland tone, turned to his companion, and said: "Come here, my lad, and let me embrace you; that is what the parson has just expressed."

Everywhere else, men speak: they speak at the bar and the tribune; but they no longer speak in the pulpit, for there we only meet with a factitious and artificial language, and a false tone. . . .

This style of speaking is only tolerated in the Church, because, unfortunately, it is so general there; elsewhere it would not be endured. . . . What would be thought of a man who should converse in a similar way in a drawing-room? He would certainly provoke many a smile.

Some time ago, there was a warden at the Pantheon—a good sort of fellow in his way—who, in enumerating the beauties of the monument, adopted precisely the tone of many of our preachers, and never failed thereby to excite the hilarity of the

visitors, who were as much amused with his style of address as with the objects of interest which he pointed out to them.

A man who has not a natural and true delivery, should not be allowed to occupy the pulpit; from thence, at least, everything that is false should be summarily banished. . . .

But is it so very difficult to be one's self? Assume your usual voice, your usual manner, modifying them according to the number of your hearers, and the truth which you are about to set forth. Let your speech be frank, sincere, cordial, revealing a true and affectionate soul. Be yourself, and be persuaded that to be so suits you best. Make manifest your heart, your soul; for there is nothing so attractive as a soul. Saint Catherine of Sienna said that if a soul could be seen, she believed that people would die of happiness at the sight.

Look at the man who has a cause to plead, or one who is moved with a strong passion; he is always true—true even to grandeur.

In these days of mistrust, everything that is false should be set aside; and the best way of correcting one's self in that respect, as regards preaching, is frequently to listen to certain monotonous and vehement preachers. We shall come away in such disgust, and with such a horror of their delivery, that we shall prefer condemning ourselves to silence rather than imitate them. The instant you abandon the

natural and the true, you forego the right to be believed, as well as the right of being listened to.

2ndly. Action should be concentrated: that is to say, it should proceed from a soul which is itself convinced, penetrated, fervent; which puts a restraint upon itself that it may not say all that it feels: unless it be from time to time, like the flames which escape at intervals from a volcano. Inward fervour harmonizes with the sacred word, whereas excessive noise and motion are wholly unsuited to it. If a passionate outburst sometimes escapes us, it should be repressed forthwith. Père Ravignan is admirable in this respect: after thundering at his audience, he immediately resumes the most benignant countenance.

In the first place, the preacher should be calm; master of himself as well as of his subject. He should have a steady demeanour, should keep his forces well in hand, not relinquish his hold over them, unless it be designedly, and never lose self-control:—*be carried away and yet possess himself, and retain self-possession while allowing himself to be carried away.*

Vocal power and bodily motion are frequently very much abused.

The more a man shouts, the greater effect he is believed to produce, and the greater orator he is held to be. Often, however, it is quite the reverse. Genuine passion—passion driven to extremities—

speaks low, says little, and that little in a few detached words. The most captivating eloquence is that which says much in a few words, and that noiselessly. . . .

The vocal power is the animal part of man; he shares it in common with the brute creation, who often possess it in a high degree. But the distinguishing sign of intelligence is the consonant. Well-educated men attend less to sound than to articulation. The vowel is the letter that kills; the consonant is the spirit which vivifies.

Bodily motion should be moderate; too much motion wearies the preacher and the audience likewise, and distracts their attention. One may be eloquent without much gesticulation. There is a famous preacher who generally speaks with his hand in his robes, whose discourses, nevertheless, are very powerful. . . . Here, also, the same reflection which was made above recurs to us: namely, that a profound passion is scarcely ever accompanied with agitation; it is unmoved, prostrate, and does not manifest itself except by occasional sudden outbursts. Mistakes are often made on this score, and that is thought to be a fervent sermon which is delivered with much bawling and much gesticulation.

It is true, as M. de Cormenin remarks, that the people are fond of expressive gestures, such as are visible at a distance, and above the heads of the congregation; that they also like a powerful and

thrilling voice; . . . but all this cannot be kept up long, for preacher and hearers soon grow tired of it. Then, again, the people are fond of variety, and a monotonous voice sends them to sleep. That the delivery of a sermon should sometimes be accompanied with significant gestures, and that emotion should occasionally vent itself in an outburst, is all well enough; but compress such power as much as possible, so that it may be felt that you possess within your own soul a force threefold greater than you outwardly manifest. . . . The more vehement you wish your sermon to be, the more you should restrain the air in its passage, forcing it to make its way in thrilling explosions and a resounding articulation. Then many will fall by the sword of the word.

3rdly. Action should be edifying.

The bearing of a man who speaks in the name of the Gospel should be full of *grace* and *truth*. It is most desirable that he should possess knowledge and talent, but those endowments do not suffice; he must possess, in addition, a virtuous, yea, even a holy exterior. Frenchmen are much more sensitive on this point than is usually thought. A godly man at once inspires their respect and veneration; and were a saint to appear in our midst, it is certain that he would reproduce many of the scenes of the middle ages. A saint is essentially a man beloved by the people, because he is surrounded with a Divine halo.

The Christian orator makes his appearance with

simplicity and modesty. He kneels and bows profoundly, rises up, and then looks round upon his audience with a kindly expression, devoutly makes the sign of the cross, and then begins his sermon, thinking only how to arrest the attention of his hearers.

The time is happily long gone by when the preacher used to enter the pulpit with great formality, a flushed countenance, and hair most carefully got up; then place by his side a fine white handkerchief, sometimes of costly silk, which ever and anon he methodically passed over his face. These airs no longer suit the times: the preacher nowadays must not be engrossed with self, with his handkerchief, or his band, or his surplice, or his hair; neither must he cause others to be taken up with such trifles. In the pulpit the man should disappear, and the apostle alone be seen. . . .

The people, who have an exquisite notion of propriety, are very sensitive on all such matters; and God often derides our affected words and actions by rendering them vain and barren, and by making use of the most insignificant things to convert the souls of men.

A converted Parisian operative, a man of a wilful but frank disposition, full of energy and spirit, who had often spoken with great success at the clubs composed of men of his own class, was asked by the priest who had reconciled him to God to inform him

by what instrumentality he who had once been so far estranged from religion had eventually been restored to the faith. "Your doing so," said his interrogator, "may be useful to me in my efforts to reclaim others."

"I would rather not," replied he; "for I must candidly tell you that you do not figure very conspicuously in the case."

"No matter," said the other; "it will not be the first time that I have heard the same remark."

"Well, if you must hear it, I can tell you how it took place, in a few words. A *religieuse* had pestered me to read your little book—pardon the expression: I used to speak in that style in those days. On reading a few pages; I was so impressed that I felt a strong desire to see you.

"I was told that you preached in a certain church, and I went to hear you. Your sermon had some further effect upon me; but, to speak frankly, very little, comparatively, indeed, none at all. What did much more for me was your open, simple, and good-natured manner, and, above all, your ill-combed hair; *for I have always detested those priests whose heads remind one of a hair-dresser's assistant;* and I said to myself:—'That man forgets himself on our behalf; we ought, therefore, to do something for his sake.' Thereupon I determined to pay you a visit, and you *bagged me.* Such was the beginning and end of the affair."

The thought should never be absent from our

minds that we preach the Gospel, and that the Gospel is pre-eminent in inculcating love towards humanity. Away, then, with all domineering and dictatorial airs! . . . Away with all violent language! The people regard it as the ebullition of anger, and are not at all edified thereby.

On the other hand, in order to succeed, the heart of the preacher must first be penetrated with what he teaches; an appropriate accent will follow of itself. There are men who carry about with them something God-like. . . . Such men are eagerly listened to, they are believed, and then loved.

From what has been said, it is obvious that we should train ourselves to obtain proficiency in action.

Action is the manifestation of the thoughts of the soul through the medium of the body. But the body often rebels and weighs down the soul; and in this, as well as in many other things, requires to be suppled, mortified, disciplined to obedience. However strong the soul may be, it rarely gets the mastery over the body at the outset, and does its part very inefficiently. It is the same with soldiers. When a young conscript first joins his regiment he is heavy and awkward, and his military arms seem a burden to him. Six months later all this is changed: he is quick and smart, and carries his arms with quite a French grace. The same transformation may be effected as regards public speaking.

One who has had considerable experience in the

direction of seminaries, has written the following; which I feel it a duty to transcribe entire:—

"It is incumbent on a preacher to possess oratorical action, and to practise himself therein until he has acquired it. Conscience, indeed, must tell him that he ought not to neglect a matter on which the success of his ministry depends; and that if, to the mischief of men's souls, theatrical actors spare no pains to attain perfection in action, the preacher should strive, with at least an equal zeal, to become proficient in that respect for the good of men's souls. What! shall the ministers of God weaken by vicious action the force of all they say, while the ministers of Satan, by consummate skill in action, redeem the vanity of their speeches, and impassion the souls of their audience! Surely, this would be a disgrace to the clergy, and an outrage on the word of God.

"If it be objected that in the case under consideration art is useless, because nature teaches what is needful, we reply, with Quintilian:—*Nihil licet esse perfectum, nisi ubi natura curâ juvatur.* All talents are rude and unformed until the precepts of art refine and impart to them that polish which makes them valuable. Demosthenes had few natural gifts for public speaking; but exercise and experience gave what nature had denied him.

"If it be objected, further, that the Apostles never learnt the rules of action, we reply that they received the power of miracles—a more than adequate compensation

for human eloquence. That, moreover, they received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which enabled them to proclaim the Gospel worthily. That, inspired by that Divine Spirit, they were eloquent in action as well as in speech; and that St. Paul would not have been listened to on the Areopagus unless he had been able to captivate the eloquent people whom he addressed, as well by external action as by the sublimity of his language.

"Saint Charles directed that the candidates for holy orders in his seminary should be exercised several times a week in public speaking; and the Church has always followed the same practice. The Fathers also bestowed much attention on the formation of speech. 'Deprive me of everything else,' says Saint Gregory of Nazianzen, 'but leave me eloquence, and I shall never regret the voyages which I have made in order to study it.'" *

What we are most deficient in is articulation—that powerful articulation which isolates, engraves, and chisels a thought . . . which fills the ear with harmony and the soul with truth; which gives the orator an extraordinary power of animation, by bringing into play the whole nervous system. We have already remarked that the force of a word is entirely in the consonant, whereas it is often laid on the vowel. The emission of the vowel is the rude block; the consonant is the artist's chisel, which

* *Traité de la Prédication.* By M. Hamon, Curé de Saint-Sulpice.

works it into a masterpiece. . . . It appears to be frequently imagined that it requires as much effort to discharge waves of air as to hurl a heavy club into space; but it is not so in the least. What is needed is that the air should be compressed and triturated, and reduced into expressive and harmonious sounds. It is from misapprehension on this score that so many preachers fume and tire themselves and others, and that some appear like men who disgorge words which they have swallowed by mistake. A little practice would prevent them from falling into these and similar aberrations.

At the same time, we should not practise, as is often done, upon every sermon which we preach, for by so doing we shall be apt to deliver them very badly. It is scarcely in nature to prepare sentiments beforehand. As M. de Cormenin satirically puts it: —"Be impassioned, thunder, rage, weep, up to the fifth word, of the third sentence, of the tenth paragraph, of the tenth leaf. How easy that would be! above all, how very natural!"

The course to be pursued is this:—we should practise ourselves in the delivery of the several parts of a discourse, such as the expository, the demonstrative, and especially those which give expression to the different passions. That done, and when once in the pulpit, such studies should cease to occupy the mind.

The exercise thus insisted on is practised in other professions. Men who devote themselves to the

theatre, cultivate their voices and their limbs. Young law students and advocates have their conferences, where they train themselves to plead at the bar; and yet those who are called to save souls neglect to cultivate the talents which God has given them!

This is the usual process:—A young man composes a sermon while at college, which is generally made up of odds and ends and quotations, and in putting them together he does his best not to be himself. With this stuff he mounts the pulpit, it may be of a town church or even of a cathedral; and behold him a full-fledged preacher! And then, forsooth, astonishment is expressed because the faithful are bored, and do not come to listen to us! The wonder is that so many attend our sermons.

But let us be just: all do not entertain this idea of sacred eloquence. By certain religious orders, the Jesuits for example, it is regarded in quite a different light. I crave pardon for revealing their family secrets; but it is for the good of souls.

A novice among the Jesuits, no matter what he may have been previously—whether a lawyer, author, preacher, canon, grand vicar, bishop, or even a cardinal—must attend a reading-class three or four times a week. There he is made to read like a child, is taught to articulate and accentuate, and every now and then is stopped, while those present are called upon to point out the merits and defects in his reading. This training is persisted in until his pro-

nunciation is perfect, and he is free from all disagreeable accent.

But that is not all: every Monday during his noviciate, or during the term of his studies, that is, for five, six, eight, or ten years, he has to undergo a training in the *tones*, which consists in his being made to recite what is called *the formula of the general tones*—a short discourse, comprising all the tones ordinarily used in oratorical compositions; such as the tone of persuasion, of menace, of kindness, of anger, of the mercy and justice of God, of prayer, and of authority. Thereby the young preacher is taught how to supple, to break in his own organism, and to adapt it to those different tones.

After these come the *special tones*. This consists of a short discourse, to be composed in two hours on a given text, and must contain certain specified strokes of oratory. Three or four of the younger novices are exercised in this way, exclusive of the sermons which are preached in the refectory.

But the most profitable part of the exercise is this, that after reciting his tones, the preacher must remain in the pulpit while the master of the novices asks some of the spectators what they think of its substance, form, expression, &c., the poor patient being present and obliged to hear all his faults detailed. This, however, is done in all charity; and moreover, his good qualities are pointed out in a similar way.

These are most interesting meetings. They comprise, besides young lawyers and ecclesiastics, men of general experience, logicians, poets, and preachers, who are all invited to express their opinion with the greatest freedom.

The youngest are interrogated first; for the young are naturally fastidious, and generally find much to blame. Time, however, will correct them of that fault. After these come the older novices, then the Jesuits well trained to preaching; and lastly, the master of the novices, who sums up the different opinions elicited, and then proceeds to expound the science. It sometimes happens, however, that the judgments passed are so well formulated and so well based, that, despite his desire to criticize or to applaud, the master is obliged to modify his own opinions.

When the young preacher leaves the pulpit, he retires to note down his defects and merits, which he is subsequently expected to read over from time to time.

One excellent feature in this exercise is the encouragement which it is designed to impart; for besides pointing out defects, no efforts are spared to develope in the novices the talents which God has given them. They are made to understand that a man may do good even though he be subject to half a dozen drawbacks. Mistakes are often made on this score. One qualification only may suffice to render a man a remarkable orator, whereas another may be free from

all obvious defects, and yet be a sorry speaker. The Lord deliver us from a faultless preacher! for he is generally a very bore, as incapable of a trait of genius as he is of a blunder. Always intent on guarding against this and that defect, he loses his personality. He is no longer a man; he is no longer a priest: he is merely a scholar doing his recitation. . . .

In order to form a young speaker into a good preacher, he should first be set to address the lower classes. . . . Among such audiences he will be better able to discover his own special talent, and to utilize his qualifications. The Jesuits pursue a similar course.

The young Jesuit is sent to address the inmates of prisons and hospitals; if in orders, he is charged with missions in rural districts; if unordained, he is put to catechize; but always accompanied by the indispensable *socius*, who is not chary of criticizing or applauding him. It is doubtless owing to this training that the members of the Society of Jesus have acquired that standing, power, and unction for which they are so conspicuous.

Another advantage of this training is that it teaches the science of life, and imparts wisdom in forming opinions.

If a young priest has not thoroughly studied the difficulties of public speaking, he is apt to think that the art of preaching consists in composing a sermon, learning it by rote, and then delivering it without

tripping. If he finds that he is considered to have acquitted himself tolerably well, he is thenceforward disposed to dogmatize remorselessly, and to tolerate no appeal from his irrevocable verdicts, with all the stateliness of a man who has the satisfaction of not knowing what he says.

But when a man has studied and laboured, say, for fifteen years, he becomes more indulgent and moderate, and begins to understand that there may be other ways of doing good besides his own. A priest who was once called upon to preach before several others of the same profession, complained that their presence rather embarrassed him. Whereupon one of our most celebrated orators remarked:—"It is far better for you to have to deal with a dozen of our first-rate preachers than with an equal number of curates or even collegians."

Practice, therefore, is indispensable. But it will be urged: "Where is the time to come from? One has so much to do during the four years passed at college, and afterwards in the work of the ministry." Very true; still we are bound to pay attention to the most essential requirements of our vocation: and should not preaching be of the number nowadays? We learn dogmatic theology, designed to serve as the ground-work for solid lectures; but if nobody comes to hear them, or if they send the audience to sleep? . . . Ethics also are learnt, and the solution of difficulties which occur at the confessional: but what

if the people do not come to confession? . . . It should ever be borne in mind that the object and aim of our studies is *propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem.* Then, again, might we not talk less about past heresies and errors, and be more taken up with the time present? Might we not also devote less attention to those doubtful questions which are the great temptation as well as the great bane of professors of theology and philosophy, who dilate at great length on the opposite opinions held regarding them, never omitting to add their own, and generally wind up somewhat in this style: Decide as you please?

I submit these considerations to the wisdom and piety of the directors of our colleges, who are well aware that a priest should not be learned for himself only, but should be capable of communicating what he knows to others, and of securing their attachment to it.

Things are taken for granted which no longer exist. It is supposed that the churches are full, that careless Christians attend the services, and that the confessionals are frequented; all which are often mere gratuitous assumptions. Something must be done before such notions are borne out by facts: namely, our priests must be taught how to attract men to the church and the confessional, and then to instruct them when they are there.

Lastly, the young students might meet together during the vacations, and mutually aid one another

by their common experience. Parish priests might also meet in a similar manner, and communicate to each other their reflections and the progress of their labours, in all simplicity and charity, just as young lawyers do. Then we might anticipate the happiness of seeing everything that is false, borrowed, factitious, artificial, stiff, vehement, trite, and noisy, together with all unmeaning action, monotony, and *ennui*, descend from the pulpit; and of seeing their place occupied by the true, the simple, the natural, the powerful: in a word, by the Gospel.

CHAPTER XI.

STUDY.

Study a Duty—The State of the World calls for Knowledge on the part of the Clergy—Knowledge has always been one of the Glories of Religion—All the eminent Men in the Church were Men of Study—Reasons adduced for not studying, answered: Want of Leisure; natural Aptitude; the Plea of having already studied sufficiently; that one is fully equal to the Requirements of the People committed to his Charge.

FROM what has been said above, it will readily be inferred that much study is called for on our part—study of the sciences and study of mankind, study of books and study of the human heart. . . . In order to attain a noble simplicity, to acquire ease, and to be natural, a man must possess profound knowledge. I even venture to say that a little study leads us away from the natural, whereas much study conducts us to it.

But there are other and still stronger motives for study on our part: namely, duty, and the salvation of mankind. It has been said, and that truly, that piety is the first and most essential requirement. We admit that it is so; but genuine piety consists in the faithful

discharge of the duties of one's station. Now, it is absolutely impossible for a priest at the present day, whatever position he may occupy, to discharge his duty without an adequate amount of learning.

For, what is a priest? He is the depositary of the science of life, and is debtor therein to every man. He is bound to trace out the way for all; for the small and great, the young and aged, the learned and ignorant, the humble and proud together.

He is bound to confront human passions and errors, to expose their wiles, to withstand the assaults of vice, and to enlighten the minds and win over the hearts of men by the power of the Gospel. A priest's need of knowledge is truly paramount. . . .

Hence the Church has always recommended study. The Fathers were men of study; the men whose genius has made them illustrious, were studious men. Look at Bossuet! we boast of his fluency: yes, he was fluent; but the thought of the life which he led up to a very advanced age is enough to make one tremble. He generally rose at two in the morning, to continue a task hardly interrupted. Let us not deceive ourselves in this matter: the labours which have redounded to the glory of the Church have been dearly bought.

Bossuet's intense devotion to study was notorious. One day his gardener accosted him thus:—"Monseigneur, I am very much put out; for I dig away and plant flowers, and you do not take the least

notice of them. If I could plant some John Chrysostoms or some Saint Augustines in my garden I should be much more successful."

Even in our own times, those priests who effect any real good are unremitting in their studies. The rule which Père Maccarthy prescribed for himself is appalling:—"My recreations," said he, "must be short. It is generally enough for me to walk about with a book in my hand, or while I am reciting my prayers. Unprofitable talk and time misspent are crimes in a priest."

At the age of fifty, he could no longer work seated, owing to an infirmity brought on by doing a charitable act. He lay down on a sheepskin spread in the centre of his room, and there worked from ten to twelve hours a day. We admire his success; but we here see what it cost him. We complain that the faithful do not come to our sermons: have we made any such efforts as these? Let us do the men of our time this justice, that whenever they come in contact with a priest possessing piety and knowledge—sound knowledge which is not acquired from books alone—he never fails to make a lively impression upon them.

On the other hand, the men of the present day crave after knowledge: it is one of their fancies. Are they right in this, or are they to blame? You may think as you please on the subject; but we are, nevertheless, bound by the obligation of charity to become all

things to all men, that we may save all ; and among the means thereto, knowledge is one of the most efficacious.

There are but two powers in the world nowadays : namely, the power of wealth and the power of talent.

The prestige of a name, of authority, and of dignity, has passed away. The fact is to be deplored ; but it is true. What are we to do in consequence ? We must take men as they are, in order to better them.

As regards the power of wealth, we do not possess it ; and we are certainly not the worse for that. We are for the most part poor, the offspring of humble parents ; and what Saint Paul said of the first Christians is applicable to us :—" Not many mighty men, not many noble, are called."

We must array ourselves, therefore, on the side of the power of talent. Therewith we may secure a hearing, and may succeed in reclaiming some to the faith. . . . There are two ways leading to religion : many are led thereto by love, and through the heart, and many likewise by knowledge ; but when the two are conjoined, incalculable good is the result.

A priest who is notoriously ignorant is already condemned : he is morally dead, whatever other excellent qualities he may possess. He is stigmatized with some such remark as this :—" He is a worthy man, but he knows nothing." . . . Thenceforward, what can you expect him to effect, even among peasants, who have heard that fatal verdict ? The world calls for knowledge from us, and we are

bound to supply it. To that end, we must study, I do not say all human sciences, but we should acquire some thoroughly, especially those which bear upon our special duties ; and, as regards others, should not be what may be called "ignorant" of them. It would be disgraceful, for example, if we were obliged to refer to laymen to explain to us the beauties of our church architecture, or the symbols which decorate our ornaments.

Frenchmen like a bold, animated, lively—a telling style of speech ; let us endeavour, therefore, to attain it. . . . The world comes to us ; let us meet it half-way. Let us partake of its science, and it will partake of our religion.

Further, knowledge has always been one of the greatest glories of the Church. At the period of the Revolution of '93, even according to the testimony of occasionally prejudiced historians, there was an immense number of men among the clergy of France who were eminent for learning and talent. Nowadays, we are called an admirable clergy—the first clergy in the world. That sounds very well ; but it is a mere compliment : that is, we do not merit the eulogy. Let us lose no time in proving our claim to it in every respect.

But there is no lack of plausible reasons adduced for our dispensing with study. Good God ! the egregious mistakes and infirmities which speech has taken under its patronage ought to be well known by

us. On the point under consideration, the reasons urged are various.

The first is: "We would gladly do it, but, really, we have no time." Now, let us be fair here. This is quite true in some cases. . . . The labours and anxieties of the sacred ministry are absorbing; and, besides, they cut up the little leisure which is left us after a conscientious discharge of our duty. . . . I say, this is true sometimes; but very often, if we only had the will! . . . How is it with us, whenever we have a strong desire for anything? . . . Put the question to the weakest among men, and you will learn even from them, that when they have the will they always find the way. Come along with me, and I think we may succeed in picking up some scraps of time, and, perchance, a large supply. . . . And, first, as regards those long dinners: if you were to curtail a little from the commencement, a little from the end, and a small portion from the middle, methinks what remained would be amply sufficient for that meal. Dignity is brief in words, and at dinner likewise; feeling that it is endangered by exhibiting itself too long and too near in the midst of meats and drinks, which savour little of Gospel mortification: without taking into account the poor, who do not see us sitting down at sumptuous tables, while they are hard at work and fare scantily. . . . And what shall we say of the numberless visits received and returned, the cares which are self-imposed, travelling, certain

kinds of reading, and inordinate sleep? In all these there is much scope for economy. Place an old academician, or a compiler of works which nobody reads, or a decipherer of illegible manuscripts, or a bird-stuffer, or the eternal collector of coins and butterflies, in the same position, and you will see how he will contrive to save therefrom five hours a day at least. . . . And we who are called to save men's souls! . . . Oh, idleness! idleness! That, too, is another of our calamities. . . . The serpent of indolence, one of the vilest beasts in creation, glides in everywhere. . . . What restrains us is this, that we do not plunge into study; that we have not the taste, the passion for study. We can only attain such a temper by hard work. Let us break through the first difficulties, then the taste will come, and ample time will be found. . . .

The fact of a man having studied a good deal during his lifetime, is another plea on the same side. It may not be expressed, but the flattering notion is nevertheless entertained that we have already acquired a certain amount of knowledge; that the public are aware of it, and have more than once complimented us on that score.

Yes, one has studied a good deal, learnt a good deal, and, we may add, forgotten a good deal. . . . Nothing is so soon forgotten as a science which is not cultivated.

A strange habit obtains in this respect. . . . We

judge of a man's abilities by what he was at college. He had ability then; but subsequently he learnt nothing, and has forgotten much of what he did learn. His knowledge has dwindled down to the wretched *just enough*:—a fact which is patent. For all that, he is still regarded as an able man. . . . Another was rather backward at college, but since then has worked, striven, and succeeded in enlarging his talents. Why should such an one be spoken of as unapt, while we venture to think that we ourselves are well up in everything, because we were believed to know something fifteen years ago? Moreover, it never seems to be borne in mind that college education merely gives us the key to knowledge and the taste for study.

But one is naturally endowed with great ingenuity; what need is there, then, for so much application? The Lord deliver us from these gifted men! They are long-winded, tedious, monotonous, bombastic, and any thing but natural; bearing out what we said above, that a little study removes us from the natural, whereas much study draws us towards it. Our aim should be to have it remarked of our discourses:—"Really, all that is very simple, and precisely what ought to have been said. It is just what I should have said myself had I been called upon to speak." But we shall not attain that stage without much painstaking. Sermons generally are worth what they cost; and our most able men are those who study most.

The course sometimes pursued of restricting study to one special subject is a sorry habit. It reminds one very much of a young man whose chief aim is to get his bachelor's degree.

But it is further urged:—"No complaints are made; on the contrary, people have been pleased to tell us that they are quite delighted with us."

Good God! and has not every one experienced the same? Who, indeed, has not been deluged with compliments? Do you know any one to whom the like has not happened? It would be a great curiosity to discover a preacher, however wretched, tiresome, and insipid he may be, who has not found a few pious souls to bestow on him the alms of a small compliment, or a small lie. He is to be congratulated, indeed, if in addition thereto, after having listened to one of our good preachers, some of them do not come to him and say, with all the subtlety of the serpent:—"Yes, his sermon was very grand, it was magnificent; still, we like your excellent and charming little discourses much better." There is no doubting one's ability after that; and one is tempted to believe himself a Ravignan, or an unrecognized Lacordaire. . . . One sees, of course, that there is some exaggeration in all this: nevertheless he is fain to believe the half of it at least. . . . Alas! flattery is the ruin of kings—and of preachers also.

Lastly, we have this plea:—"I know quite enough to speak to my own people; I shall always be superior

to the good souls which are committed to my charge." . . . It is not superior to, but in unison with them that you should be. . . . Let us see, however, what your knowledge really is, in connection with the good souls you speak of. Whenever you address them from the pulpit, is their attention riveted? do their countenances beam, do their eyes glisten, or are they moistened with tears? Do you hold them under the spell of your words? Do you possess their souls, together with your own? . . . "Alas! no," you reply; "blockheads that they are: they yawn, they dread the sermon, and are delighted on finding that at mass the Gospel is immediately followed by the Creed." . . . Away to study! then; . . . brush up your knowledge and your heart; betake yourself once more to the study of your people; find out their weak and their strong points; study their minds, their manner of looking at and apprehending things; and then you will come forth to proclaim the truth pithily and powerfully, and will take up your proper position. The general impression, however, appears to be that a preacher has but to open his mouth and the people should listen to him with ecstasy; otherwise they are called dull and stupid. Instead of speaking to them a language which they understand, they are treated to a theological theme amplified; whereon they remark: —"All that is undoubtedly very grand; but it does not concern us." Or, as an operative once said:—

"If that is the word of God, it is not addressed to us; it must be intended for the rich." . . .

Study, then, is necessary to qualify us for doing good to all; even to the lower orders, the poorest and meanest. We have remarked elsewhere, that it is more difficult to preach to the people than to the literary: more preparation is required. Hence it is that there are more men fitted to address the upper than the lower classes; and yet the latter form nearly the whole of the community. . . . Be it ours, then, to attain that superiority which knowledge confers; whereby also we shall be able to lay hold of both small and great, through the medium which they severally offer for being so secured. The world thirsts for knowledge; let us give them knowledge; let us make ourselves masters of knowledge, for then we shall undoubtedly be stronger than the world. We shall then be invested with a twofold power: the power of human and the power of Divine knowledge. The world possesses the power of human speech only; we shall possess that, and the power of God's word likewise. In a word, the world possesses the earth; absolutely nothing but the earth: we, too, shall possess the earth—and heaven besides.

CHAPTER XII.

ZEAL.

The Excellency of Zeal—Love for the Body should be coupled with Love for the Soul—The Zeal of the Wicked—How Zeal should be exercised—Associations of Apprentices, of Operatives—Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, of Domestics, of Clerks, of the Young—Circulation of good Books—Happy Results of the same—The Advantages and Difficulties of Opposition—Great Occasions.

THERE is a sentiment which should sustain us, and infuse life into all that has been above set forth; into our studies, our composition, and into the Divine word: namely, Zeal. Zeal is power, joy, happiness, expectation, reward and salvation, to the priest and to humanity generally.

We need not stop to prove the necessity of zeal. . . . It is enjoined on all men:—*Unicuique mandavit Dominus de proximo suo.* . . . Is a priest who is without zeal a priest at all? Is not such an one rather a mere man? He is placed here solely to keep up the *sacred fire* which the Lord Jesus brought down to earth; and what must a cold and insensible priest be nowadays in the midst of those who are perishing through the vices which fret and con-

sume them? He is an almost inconceivable contradiction. . . .

One of the glories of Christianity is its zeal in ministering to the wants of the body: a charitable service, wherein the priest takes a conspicuous part. But of what avail is it to succour the body, if the soul is neglected? Of what use is it to go forth proclaiming charity! charity! if the soul, the most sensitive and suffering part of mankind, is abandoned to endless misery? Who can fail to be touched with compassion at the sight of so many poor creatures who drudge and wear themselves out, who go and come, who endure and curse, unconsoled and hopeless?

The greater part of them, notwithstanding, are not vicious. Some are ignorant, others are led astray; . . . many waver between the good and the bad, only waiting for a kindly word to be addressed to them; for an outstretched hand; for some great stream of good to pass by them, and carry them away in its current. How gladly would they follow it! . . . Well, be it ours to create such currents of truth and virtue; be it ours to confront human errors and passions, and to arrest their onward progress.

I fancy that we stick too closely to our own snug corners, and to our own ideas. Yes, we stand apart! . . . and, regarding the world's progress from thence, we naturally find that it goes on most unsatisfactorily. Very likely: . . . we suffer it to be

led by evil passions; . . . whereas we should take our stand in the breach as Moses did; confront the invading vices and lusts, come to a hand-to-hand struggle with them, and cry out to them with the mighty voice of God:—"Stop! stop! you shall not carry away these souls, for they are not yours, but Christ's; He has bought them, and redeemed them with His blood!" . . . If such courage, such resolution, such vigour as this was more common amongst us, the aspect of the world would speedily be changed. But, alas! our good qualities are feeble; we have lost the power to will; we allow ourselves to be carried away in the stream. What is wanted nowadays to direct the world is not knowledge so much as it is *will*. . . . Where, indeed, are we to look for men with a will? . . .

If we needed any additional consideration to stimulate our zeal, we might say to ourselves:—"Let us observe the world; let us see how the wicked act." . . . The wicked, indeed, afford us Christians some most humiliating and painful lessons, enough to make us hide our faces from very shame; so much so, that we can wish nothing better than that the best amongst us might possess that zeal for what is good which the wicked evince for what is evil.

We censure the wicked, and are right in doing so; but let us at any rate do them this justice, that they are adepts in their profession: . . . they profess their opinions boldly; . . . they are

zealous and active; . . . they are energetic, and ready to sacrifice every thing, repose, money, liberty, even life itself. . . . Then, how adroit they are! how expert in making themselves great with the great, and little with the little! A pernicious book appears . . . forthwith it is put into an attractive shape and embellished with fine engravings . . . There it is, to suit the rich and the drawing-room. . . .

Next, an ordinary edition at a moderate cost is prepared for the middle classes, for reading-rooms, and for the counter; and then a popular edition—copies to be had at four sous each—for the workshop and the cottage. A man, recently converted, avowed that he had contributed in three years no less a sum than 30,000 francs in the dissemination of such books. And we! . . . we Christians, who know the worth of men's souls, whose duty it is to save them, rest satisfied with a few slender efforts directed, often by mere routine! Shall we continue any longer inactive at the sight of the torrents of vice and error which are hurrying our brothers on to the abyss? Would that be to have faith? Would that be to have charity? Would that be to love God and our neighbour? . . .

But how should this zeal be carried out into practice? That is the important question. . . .

In the first place, associations should be formed. In these days we cannot dispense with them.

Society must be taken up in detail, ameliorated part by part, and then formed into a compact struc-

ture; for a good community can only be composed of good elements. These objects may be attained through the medium of associations. There should be such for all ages: associations of children, of apprentices, of operatives, of Saint Vincent de Paul, of the *Sainte Famille*,* &c. They benefit all, the members and the directors also.

How comes it that there are not associations of young apprentices in all the towns of France? How comes it that any town dares to be without one? What strange beings we are sometimes! We surround children with the most tender and assiduous care up to the time of confirmation, and then, at the most critical age, when their passions begin to cross them, we launch them forth, without support and without counterpoise, into that pestilential atmosphere called the workshop; and then we wonder, and say naïvely that they do not persevere in the right path. . . . Pray, can they be expected to persevere when thus left to their own resources? . . . You, with all your religious knowledge, with all your acquired virtues, with all your experience and age, would you do so in their place? I defy you to persevere under such circumstances. . . .

An affiliated society of Saint Vincent de Paul should exist everywhere, even in the most retired corner of France. It already comprises five hundred

* See the *Manuel de Charité* and the *Livre des Classes Ouvrières* for the details and manner of establishing and conducting these associations.

conferences. They have been founded in the country, where they do a vast amount of good. No town or village, at least, should be without its conference. It is sometimes urged that the elements are wanting. That must be a wretched town or hamlet which cannot muster three God-fearing and charitably-disposed individuals.

Moreover, no town should be without its association of operatives. There can no longer be any excuse on this head. They exist elsewhere, are in active operation, and effect much good in many places. The way to form and direct them is well known. We have our associations of girls and grown-up women; but the men, the poor men, are overlooked, neglected, and cast aside. . . .

Lastly, we should have an association of the *Saint Famille*—an association for the poor.

The poor are so miserable as they are owing to the ignorance and moral abandonment in which they live. . . . An association tends to enlighten, to support, to elevate them; as also to bring charity into play. Let no one tell us that he lacks time for this object. Time is given you especially for the service of the poor; your first duty is to evangelize the poor. . . . On the other hand, are you anxious to benefit the rich, to touch their hearts, to gain their confidence, or even to secure their adoration—I say, is such your desire? If so, busy yourselves on behalf of the poor, devote yourselves to the service of the poor, be popular in a

holy sense; then, instead of vegetating in the midst of your fine phrases and isolation, you will live in the fulness of life. You will see around you outstretched hands, willing hearts, and open purses, and will hear many a voice applauding and cheering you with a cordial "Well done! take courage!" You will be driven to humble yourself before God, saying: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Yes, let us be just towards the wealthy classes, towards the world generally, and even towards those who do not practise religion at all. Whenever they fall in with a priest who is friendly to the poor, they are ready to pay him a large tribute of respect and veneration; and nothing so much resembles love towards God as the love which is shown towards one of His ministers.

Other associations might also be formed with advantage. For example, in towns, a servants' association; but as humility is not one of our virtues, either among high or low, it might be called the Household Association. It might meet on Sunday—say once a month—and one would have an opportunity of telling that class a host of truths which could not well be spoken elsewhere; and these poor people, who are more and more disposed to treat their masters as enemies, might be set right. It is much to be regretted that a hostile party is being formed in families; which, under certain circumstances, might prove highly dangerous. On the other hand, all the fault does not

come from below. Nothing now but interest binds the master to his servant, and servants attach themselves to those who give the highest wages. As to probity, fidelity and discretion, where are they to be found? . . . Masters are not only robbed, they are outraged.

Further, a mothers' association. The duties of a mother, more especially among the lower classes, are very arduous. She requires to be enlightened, encouraged, stirred up, and perhaps rebuked. Such an association would afford eligible opportunities for telling them many things which could not be appropriately delivered before a mixed assembly. It is a great misfortune for a family when the husband forgets himself and his duties; but when the wife gives way, all is lost. Is she not, indeed, the guardian of religion and virtue at the domestic hearth? The attempt thus suggested has been made at Bordeaux and elsewhere with perfect success.*

There are two other associations which should by all means be established in large towns: namely, an association of young clerks, and an association of those young persons who are called shop-girls or girls of the counter. These two classes are most shamefully neglected; hence their morality is generally *nil* . . . and from the large towns they go to the smaller towns, and into the larger villages, where they help to form that egotistical, sensual, *Voltairian*,

* See the *Manuel de Charité.*

excitable, and vain shop-class, ever ready to disseminate the vicious lessons which they have acquired.

It would be easy to form these associations. There would be no difficulty as regards the young females. With respect to the men, all that is required is a good nucleus; which would soon be increased by those who are at a distance from their homes. Families are often pained at being obliged to launch a young man alone into a great city, and would feel much happier on learning that there would be some to protect him against being led astray, and who would help him on in his new career. Almost all the young people who come up from the country are Christians up to the time of leaving their homes. Some genial title might be given to the association, which would make it attractive.

Another great field for the exercise of zeal is the diffusion of good books.*

This kind of ministration has not been adequately or generally appreciated hitherto. The ministry of the word, which is proclaimed in our churches, is recognized; but that of the word which, in the guise of a good book, goes and sits down at the domestic hearth, is not understood as it should be.

We are, however, making some progress in this respect; and I trust that the magnitude of existing evils may stir us up to greater activity, and that after

* See the *Manuel de Charité* under the chapter headed *Les Bibliothèques.*

being thoroughly beaten we shall rise up again as becomes Christians.

The Christian of the present day is not constitutionally brave; he is rather timid, is subject to a number of little infirmities, and does all he can to reconcile duty with interest. But when he perceives that he has been wronged, when he is driven to extremes, he falls back upon himself, recovers his strength, and stands up for the faith. Then he is grand and bold; then he defends himself, resists, assails, and triumphs even in death.

The time has come for us to avail ourselves of that tremendous engine which Providence has introduced into the world for good and for evil. Has not the Press injured us enough already? Has it not already thrown blood and scum enough at humanity and religion? Are not the two hundred millions of pernicious books scattered throughout France enough? Is not the world sufficiently estranged from the Church already? What do we wait for?

A powerful means of doing good is here placed within our reach. Don't be deceived; almost everybody reads nowadays. Mistakes, however, are frequently made on that score.

A preacher gives a *retreat** in a country district, and is told by the curé that his people do not read. As the exercises progress, heaps of books are forthcoming of so abominable a description that the like

* A series of special religious services.—ED.

are not to be found in the purlieus of Paris—books the very titles of which are an outrage on public morality.

Let us here recall to mind what has already been stated, that there are now in France from eighteen to twenty millions more persons able to read than there were at the end of the eighteenth century.

But it is urged that good books are not read.—*That* in a great measure depends on the quality of the books.

Further, that after reading them, men are just the same as they were. Not always; and who can tell but that some thought has taken root in their minds which in time will bear fruit. There are books which have wrought many conversions; which in the course of a few years have reclaimed more individuals than our most celebrated preachers have converted during their lives. I may instance one which is universally known, which has been and still is the angel of good to many perishing sinners; yes, and such sinners too! such men! You have already guessed the title of the book alluded to—it is the *Etudes Philosophiques* by M. Nicholas.*

Sober town curés have expressed to us their belief

* A person holding a high position wrote to the author of the above-named work as follows:—"From being wholly indifferent to religion, you have made me, in a fortnight, a fervent Christian, one sincerely repentant, and firmly determined to lead a holy life." . . . Another addressed him thus:—"I owe a great share of my restoration to your book, which I shall try and induce all my relations and friends to read."

that they have effected more good among their people by means of their libraries, than by their sermons and all the other resources of the ministry combined.

But these books should be selected with great care: nevertheless, very little attention is bestowed on that point. How strange! One takes great pains about a sermon, which will be heard at most by a few hundreds of individuals, and no care is exercised in the selection of a book which will go to speak of God to the thousands who do not frequent the Church! At the yearly distribution of prizes in France, twelve hundred thousand volumes are given gratuitously to respectable schools. What a vast amount of good might be done through that channel, if the books were well chosen! What a mass of profitable reading might be introduced thereby among families! But as it is, the works are taken up at random. A book receives a bishop's approval; which is deemed amply sufficient to warrant its adoption. It may be barren of ideas, tiresome, nothing more than a bad religious romance; it may even be dangerous: no matter, it is given away, notwithstanding all those defects. But what is passing strange is the fact that this is done by men who have a religious vocation, who are otherwise most distinguished, and who are intrusted with the education of the children of the upper classes. It would seem, indeed, as if we were bent on verifying the assertion of our adversaries, that the pious possess no other than a contemptible and humdrum literature.

It would be an act of intelligent zeal to remedy these aberrations.

Lastly, another way of promoting the diffusion of good books is to give men a personal interest in the undertaking. Authors and publishers should be amply commended and remunerated for their co-operation; and the trade—if you choose to call it so—made subservient to the good work. Let those, also, who sell such books make large profits by the sale. Generally speaking, success is not best attained by acting alone, but by securing and availing ourselves of the assistance of others. We often make too much fuss about our proceedings, and should effect twice as much if we fussed one half less.

But it will be urged:—"Such associations cannot be formed without self-sacrifice and money; besides, they will encounter opposition." Undoubtedly they will; and so much the better. Opposition and calumny are the rod which God uses to drive us onward. . . . If there be opposition, then there will be courage too; and many other noble qualities will be elicited. Is it so, I ask, that we are called to "vulgarly follow the masses?" . . .

There is a class of well-disposed people, who appear to have no misgivings as to what Christianity is, who, nevertheless, give expression to their supineness with a charming naïveté. You propose some good work to them; they reply at once:—"Excuse me; there will be obstacles in the way; the time has

not yet come for such things; and, moreover, I should not like to put myself forward in matters of that kind, for it might place me in an awkward position." One feels tempted on these occasions to ask the apologist:—"Are you a Christian?" You may do so, and the ready reply will be:—"Yes, by the grace of God."

What, then, do you understand by being a Christian?

One who believes in the doctrine of Christ, has been baptized. . . .

Now, listen to what the doctrine of Christ is:—Blessed are they which are persecuted. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you,—when they shall drag you before the rulers of the people. . . .

I think there is a prevailing tendency to regard those texts of Holy Writ which embarrass us as mere rhetorical figures.

Men talk of the possibility of being placed in a false position—that the time has not come—that there will be opposition, &c. In like manner, when Christ sent His apostles to convert the world, might they not also have said:—"But, Lord, the world is not prepared; it is still so insensible. Besides, we shall encounter opposition?" . . . Or, when their shoulders were beaten with rods, might they not have felt justified in saying:—

"Let us return to our own quiet life, for this only brings us into difficulties?"

Is not a priest's life essentially a militant life? Is not the priest a soldier? What would be said, what would be thought of a soldier who, on hearing the alarm, the enemy! to arms! should coolly reply: —"Stop, there will be opposition; the enemy will resist and assail us with musketry and artillery?" There would only be one name for such a soldier in France—he would be called a coward. But no such soldier is to be found amongst us; on the contrary, at the bare thought of opposition and resistance to be encountered, his courage rises, his heart leaps, he runs, he strikes, he conquers, or he dies a glorious death. That is what a priest ought to be; . . . better still: he should feel that he is safe beneath the power of the Almighty; and be like a general who maintains perfect calm while shot, shell, and death, are flying around him in every direction.

Good God! what have we to do with peace? Peace will never be yours. . . . Talk of peace to men who are conquerors! . . . Was it not said in a celebrated harangue:—"We are the first soldiers . . . and yet they come to talk to us of peace!" The priest is a jeopardized, a sacrificed man, dead to the life of this world, to whom it has been said:—"Go and defend such a post, and die to save, not an army, but humanity." Be assured, then, that you will never have peace, because human passions will eternally war against you.

We have borrowed two things from the present

age—and those by no means the best of what it possesses—which do us a vast amount of injury. The first is, a profound weakness of character, which prefers a petty, vulgar, and rather sensual existence, disposing us to lead the life of a retired tradesman. The second is a tendency to *officialism*. We blame that tendency in others; but are we not somewhat bureaucratic ourselves? We consider those among us to be great men who are what is called good administrators. The accessory has usurped the place of principal. Administration is everything: in certain localities it stifles the sacred ministry. If Saint Paul himself were to return to earth, he would hardly be deemed fit to be the curé of a canton, unless he was judged to be well versed in administration.

Yet when Christ placed Saint Peter at the head of His Church, he did not put the question to him:—"Canst thou administer well?" but, "Lovest thou Me? lovest thou Me? Art thou quite sure that thou lovest Me?"—that is, Dost thou know how to save the souls of men? how to devote thyself, how to die for their sakes?

This brings us back again to the subject of zeal. There are many earnest-minded priests in France—most admirable men in every respect. Among the laity also, there is no lack of zeal, devotion, and the spirit of self-sacrifice . . . A Christian who has no zeal is not tolerated: in fact, there is much more of it than is generally supposed.

Now, something like this frequently happens:—On going to a town which has hitherto exhibited no signs of zeal, you ask the priest:—"How comes it that you have no associations, no society of apprentices, of operatives, or of the *Sainte Famille?* What are you about? It is a shame!" . . . He will reply:—"How can I help it? I have no colleagues, and no laymen are available. Besides, our people do not like to be drawn out of their old habits: it is not with us as it is elsewhere." . . . You then make the same observations to the laymen, and they immediately answer:—"Pray, don't mention it, for it is not our fault. We should like nothing better; but we have no priests to take the lead, and to tell us how to act. Our priests are excellent men in their way, but *they cannot step out of their routine.*"

It should be our endeavour, therefore, to bring priests and laymen together; then there will be a mutual understanding between them, and both will heartily co-operate in doing good.

For, at any cost, we must save souls. That is our duty, our joy, our crown, that whereon our whole future depends; and what is said of men of the world, who have made a false step in life, will be said of the priest who fails in that respect—he has lost his chance.

We should take advantage of every opportunity to benefit the souls of men; to enlighten, to reclaim,

to reconcile them. A confirmation, for example, associated as it is with so many sweet and sad reminiscences, offers a most eligible occasion for such efforts. But beware of all vulgar vituperation of unbelievers, or of the parents. They are on the look-out for such tirades, and have already hardened their hearts and their faces against them. Rather aim at their hearts, where they least expect an attack, and where they are not prepared to resist you.

After stating that God will require a strict account of parents for the manner in which their children have been brought up, turn at once to the parents and say :—

"Do not be alarmed, for I am not going to reproach you. I would not disturb your present happiness. I would not detract one iota from your gratification. Enjoy it thoroughly, for you have a right to it ; it is but a slender recompense for all your pains. Look at your children, they are happy, and they owe their happiness to religion. No, I cannot bring myself to utter any thing which might trouble you on this occasion ; for it must have cost you pain enough already to see your children go alone to the holy table, absolutely like orphans, while you yourselves stand apart, and are driven to say :—' Yes, my child is worthy to be there, but I am not.' . . . I say, such a reflection as this must have caused you intense sorrow.

"Nevertheless, you are not so much estranged from religion as you may think: God is not far from you. One always loves his child's friend, and your child's best friend is God. . . . Can you repel religion, can you repulse God Himself, whom we are about to send to you this evening in the angelic form of a dearly loved child? Draw near then to the Gospel . . . carry away with you, at least, some pious sentiment, some wholesome regret, some incipient desire after that which is good." . . . Adopt some such strain as this, and your words will not be in vain.

Similar efforts might be made on the termination of the special services for Lent and the great ecclesiastical seasons, and on other extraordinary occasions also. After congratulating those who have profited by the means of grace, be careful to abstain from upbraiding or denouncing those who have abused them. Such a course is low and vulgar, and does much harm. On the contrary, do all you can to encourage and touch the hearts of all. I may suggest the following. Say what a pious and zealous *religieux* once said to his audience, at the end of a home mission:—

"Brethren, I am going to tell you an anecdote. It is not true, for the details are impossible. It is merely a parable.

"It is alleged that there is a country near the north pole, where it is so cold that words are frozen

as they issue from the lips. If two men placed apart at a certain distance attempt to converse, they do not hear one another, for their words freeze in the air. But when spring comes, then their words are heard.

"Brethren, it is cold too and icy round your souls, and our words freeze; but when spring comes, when God's sun shall shine, then these our words will thaw and penetrate into your hearts, even though it be not till the hour of death."

Thus, let there be an outburst of love and kindliness towards those who have been edified by the means of grace, and a still larger and more affectionate appeal to those who seemingly have not profited thereby.—"What shall I say to you? Shall I address you in the language of severity? I might claim the right to do so in God's name; but certainly I have no desire to avail myself of that prerogative. I prefer holding out a hand to you; I prefer pitying, commiserating your misfortune. It would have been delightful for me to have been the instrument of your salvation; but you would not let me save you. Doubtless, God has not judged me worthy; although my mission here embraced you also. . . . Another, I trust, will be more successful. . . . Be assured that I entertain no ill-will towards you: I do not denounce you; on the contrary, I shall ever pray for you.

"Draw a little nearer towards religion. In your calmer moments you sometimes say:—'I do not wish to die without the consolations of religion. Were I to fall sick, I should send for a priest.' Well, then, dispose yourself to return to the right path: curb your passions, and break off those habits which poison your existence. Above all, do not be a stumbling-block to your children. How often, as you well know, alas! are fathers the ruin of their offspring. Therefore have pity on your children, and on your wives also; for I whisper it to you that you are said to be sometimes harsh towards them. Ah, the poor wives! such treatment must be very painful to them: they who have already suffered and endured so much." . . .

That is the way to appeal to the hearts of men! Such are the joys of the sacred ministry! They are the only joys vouchsafed to us: and yet can we dare to complain? Are they not the most delectable joys which earth can afford? To have committed to him the souls of poor sinners to save, to love, and to bless; to be charged with condescending towards his erring brethren; gathering them in his arms from amidst the miseries and sufferings of this life, and of leading them to the truth, to virtue, and to heaven,—is not this the sweetest enjoyment which a priest's heart can desire? Was it not to that end that he bade adieu to the world and left

his father and his mother in tears? . . . O holy joys of the sacred ministry, how little are they known and felt by any of us! It is painful, doubtless, to have to stir up sin-sick souls; but when at the cost of much self-sacrifice we are able to benefit but one such soul, with what overflowing gratitude shall we thank God, and say:

"MAY ALL MY DAYS BE LIKE THIS DAY!"

THE END.

London: Printed by SMITH, ELDER and Co., Old Bailey, E.C.

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